MODERN GERMAN SHORT STORIES

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Translated by

ZAHOORUL HUQ

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FOREWORD

It is a pleasure for me to write a foreword to the Modern German Short Stories published in Pakistan and translated by Mr. Zahoorul Huq. These stories had been originally published in contemporary German newspapers and periodicals. A translation always fails to give the flavour of the original as the nuances and the finesse of one language cannot be always conveyed in another language. These translations nevertheless would, I am sure, stimulate the interest of Pakistani readers in our literature and the Urdu and Bengali versions would be read by a even wider section of Pakistani public.

The President of the Federal Republic of Germany had been pleased to award Mr. Huq "The Knights Cross of the Order of Merit of Germany" for the valuable services rendered by him in the cause of furthering friendly relations between our two countries during his six years of office as Press Attache of the Embassy of Pakistan in Bonn. It is encouraging that Mr. Huq has maintained his interest in our literature even after his transfer from Bonn and has brought out this translation of 15 short stories already published in Pakistani newspapers and periodicals in bookform.

GUENTHER SCHOLL

Ambassador
of the
Federal Republic of Germany

CONTENTS

SIEGFRIED LENZ

Hyaenas' Favourite Dish

He sat with his back to the wall. A stuffed wild boar's head was hanging on the wall over his head. The two women were sitting beside him. I heard how the women had been persuading him in plaintive voices as I entered the small pub. Their threatening words were hurled on his young still face. Alternately the two women complained impatiently but mildly but he was sitting there and was just quiet.

Both the women simultaneously got up but the young American did not say a word. He neither moved nor looked at them while they lifted their handbags and pushed a packet under his table and arm-in-arm passed by me towards the door. They talked in whispering tone and I saw their clean rosy skin, their well-done hair on which they carried the same flat hats in white and yellow with violets.

Once more I saw them through the window as they were walking arm-in-arm with the tenderness

of two friends as if they were conspiring something and both smiled.

We were alone. He finished his drink in one gulp, ordered another double cognac, smoked and sat with a still face under the head of the wild boar. The boar looked at the cigarette smoke with a fixed grin through its artificial eyes. Its big curved sand-coloured teeth pointing to its eyes looked parched and dry.

I took a cognac and looked at the man. He had an athletic figure and was sitting brooding. A good-looking man with an open camel-hair coat with well-brushed hair. He was handsome and reminded me of the man in the poster who was envied by his friends because he always received presents of sports underwear from his wife.

I noticed that he always ordered double cognacs which he finished in a sharp gulp with no expression on his face. At last he was sorry for the waiter and ordered a bottle and poured it out himself and put the bottle on the scratched marble table.

Now he turned round as if he was awakened by the clatter of the bottle on the marble table, lifted

his head, looked at the wall-paper blackened by smoke and suddenly discovered the wild boar's head over him and then me in the corner. Sadly he smiled at me. I smiled back. He pointed with his thumb to the wild boar and asked, 'Do you know when it received its drink for the last time?'

'This morning,' I said.

'Well,' he said, 'then there is nothing to fear.'

Unexpectedly he lifted the bottle and held it to me invitingly. 'What about a drink before the wild boar becomes thirsty again....'. I took my glass and went to his table. A nice smell of a good shaving lotion was coming from him.

'Well,' and we took our drinks.

'To whom shall we drink?' I asked.

'To all that we hate,' said he. While he was speaking the cigarette moved between his lips. He had brown slanting eyes with thin eyebrows. I noticed that his face was without any wrinkle.

Again he filled the glasses, threw a glance at the

window and then he half got up to take off his coat, his arms stiffly stretching back and the coat slipping down. I caught his glance and asked, 'First time in Germany?'

'No,' he said, 'not me, but my wife and my daughter. They are here for the first time.'

'Your daughter?'

'Majorie, yes. They are on the way to buy shoes.'

'You can have very good shoes here,' I said.

'Ah,' he said with disgust. 'They have everywhere bought shoes, first in Paris, then in Italy and now here in Germany.'

An expression of resigned scorn and tiring bitterness came on his face. He rubbed off the small fire from the cigarette and threw the butt in the ashtray. Some ashes were scattered.

'Shoes,' he said scornfully, 'wherever we go they would first buy shoes. As if the whole of Europe had nothing to offer except shoestores. This tour would be a good reason for which I would go barefooted for the rest of my life. I simply hate them.'

'Also your daughter,' I asked, 'also Majorie?'

'There is no difference between the two, at least for me there is no difference, they are both women.'

He heaved a sigh, pushed lightly the open lips looking as if he was blowing over a hot soup. His eyeballs became red at the edge and his skin creeped with shudders produced by alcohol and memories. His bearing was somewhat wearisome and with an effort he tried to avoid the closing of his left eyelid. His eyes were wandering off and he was getting drunk.

* * *

I thought of the women with whom he was travelling, of their rosy skin and their tenderness in doing everything together. As I remembered the two women whom I had taken for sisters before—their whispering arm-in-arm posture with their buoyant health, I felt a pity for this man. I told him, 'I am very sorry.'

'Thanks,' he said. 'It was not for nothing. Now I know what I have to do and I will do it. Now I have realized. This journey has opened my eyes.'

'A journey is sometimes very good for that.'

'Friend', he said, 'I wish every man who thinks much about women should make such a journey.'

'Did you have any trouble?'

'We have not come all the way only to buy shoes, my friend. As usual we first arrived in Paris. But we did not want to stay there. It was agreed that we should go to a flat forest meadow before a river with a strong current near Bernay in the Normandy. During the war on a grey morning in November we made an emergency landing on this meadow near Bernay as our petrol tanks were just riddled with shots.

'I was the pilot and I wanted to see this meadow again. It had not disappointed us although I had not thought much of it as the machine touched the ground and came to a stop before the river. I wanted to see this shabby meadow which even enabled us to take-off again after we had repaired our tanks. It was the reason why we wanted to come to Bernay.'

'And?' I asked.

'I have not seen this meadow again,' he said. 'We stayed in Paris where we had arrived and they could not part from Paris and they bought shoes,

We could not leave the city till the time we had to spend in France was finished. Then we drove to Italy and I have not seen the little meadow.'

He spoke softly without any tiring scorn or bitterness. His voice was indifferent and deadly detached. It resembled the voice which I sometimes heard in the radio coming from far off and reaching me as if piteously pleading from an invisible dungeon and leaving no possibility of objection. And this voice did not want more than its right to be acknowledged.

'And in Italy?' I said.

'The Italians make the best shoes,' he said. 'Marlene Dietrich buys her shoes in Italy and also Queen Soraya. Everybody who is particular about shoes should buy them in the land of macaronies.'

'Did you know Italy?'

'Friend,' he said, 'the first time I was in Italy I had the second highest decoration and this time we drove there as I wanted to look for a man. I do not know his name. I only know that he lives on the mountain over the bridge. At that time I was ordered to destroy the bridge. I flew there to carry out this

order but during the bombing sheep appeared on the bridge, a whole flock of sheep in the dust driven by the man below me.

'We could not wait. We could not ask the sheep to leave the bridge. We carried out the order and already during our return flight I made up my mind that later I would search for the man who had driven the sheep and would bring him something.'

'Is he still alive?'

'We have bought shoes,' he said. 'I have not seen the man as they had not allowed me to go there. They could go out alone and they did their shopping alone but when they returned to the hotel they wanted to find me. They believed that they would die, have nervous breakdown and skin-rash if I had not been waiting for them. Oh, I hate them. I hate their soft accusations and their gentle reproaches and mostly hate them when they allude to their helplessness and appeal to my manliness...... Do you know the favourite dish of hyaenas, friend? It is the shoes, by God..........'

The cigarette was moving between his lips and the smoke was rising in rings over his face and reached

the shaggy head of the wild boar whose mouth was so much open that one could see its red plastered tongue. With sad gentleness the young American looked at me, filled my glass and kindly invited me to drink. And I took my drink.

His face was a little swollen from alcohol and his look was rather wandering but his voice did not change. His voice was soft and he spoke with me with considerable detachment. I did not dare to object. I heard him as if I was hearing the voice from the radio.

'You have come to Germany from Italy?'

'Yes,' he said, 'from Italy to here. And I prayed on the way that clouds of ants should fall on the German shoestores. But my prayer was not granted, my friend. When they saw the first shoestore they stopped, but this time I did not give in so quickly. This time there is something at stake for me. Forty kilometres from here after an attack on this town, they shot me down and all the controls were cut off and we took the risk to get out.

'But I came out. The parachute opened correctly and as I was gliding down, I saw the river below me. When my parachute had opened Charles was falling

in my direction with his arms stretching out, striking and fluttering as the ropes and the umbrella of his parachute did not open. He was hurling down and I believed he would fall on me.

'But he did not even touch my parachute and rushed past me. I seized the ropes of his parachute and held it fast. We landed both on the river on my parachute. Charles was wounded and drowned.'

'It was forty kilometres from here?'

'It could not have been longer. That was the end of the war for me. And now I want to drive to Charles' grave and tell him that I am here. We were good friends in school. We have been here in this town for the last four days and I have not yet been able to drive to his grave........Oh, I simply hate them. But now I know what I should do.'

* * *

He violently seized the bottle and clutched it. I saw his knuckles becoming white and his mouth contracting. Suddenly he leaned back and kicked at the packet under the table. The packet slipped between the legs of my chair and slipped further with a creaking noise through the middle of the pub to the brown felt curtain hanging over the door.

'Shoes,' he said. 'The packet also contains shoes—the favourite dish of hyaenas.'

The lean waiter pushed his head suspiciously through the sliding door of the kitchen.

'Bill, please,' said the American. The waiter came and he paid.

Without any haste he put on his coat and I saw outside behind the window the two women getting out of a taxi hurriedly with their flat hats in yellow and white with violets. One of them—I could not make out whether Majorie or her mother—carried the string of a packet. They pushed back the felt curtain and without any surprise lifted the packet lying on the floor and came to our table.

He was very quiet. Coldly he allowed one of the women to kiss his cheek. His face was without any motion as they pushed the two packets to him on the marble table. Without any words he lifted them. I was waiting for something to happen as I believed that it should happen. But nothing happened. He looked at me once more to express his concealed gratitude. Then all three went out to the taxi—he knew what he had to do.

PERCY ECKSTEIN

The Last Rendezvous

Mrs. Anita looked at the photograph nearly a hundred times and every time she was pleased—an intelligent sympathetic mature man with a broad well-formed forehead, clever friendly eyes, a strong but not a hard mouth. How lucky it was that Mrs. Anita had overcome her hesitation and replied to that advertisement.

Again and again she asked herself if her own photograph had made the same pleasant impression on Dr. Werner. The photograph was taken a few years back but a look in the mirror would confirm that Mrs. Anita still looked almost the same as the photograph which she sent to the unknown correspondent on his request.

Married at twenty, mother at twenty one and widowed at twenty eight she has still the right at forty three to look forward for love and happiness that make life worthwhile. The daughter is already

a grown up young girl and goes her own way. Why should not the mother do the same?

It is not the first time that she tries to persuade herself. She reflected that it was just a predestined chance that she replied to this particular marriage-advertisement out of the many in the newspapers and as a result of which the serious letter and the photograph of Dr. Werner were received.

What would Liliane say if she came to know that her mother went out for a rendezvous? Would she encourage her or would she make fun of her mother's adventure? Or would she even be jealous?

Mrs. Anita found it difficult to confide in her daughter although she used to speak to her about everything. If the whole thing turns out to be a failure then it is better that the daughter does not know anything about it.

In his letter Dr. Werner addressed Mrs. Anita as 'Miss'. How would he react when he comes to know that his correspondent is a widow and a mother of a grown up daughter? Would the photograph make him expect too much? Would personal acquaintance disappoint him after all?

This afternoon is passing so slowly. It is still one complete hour until it is time to go to the rendezvous. It is really lucky that Liliane has gone out to meet a friend. It would have been difficult for Mrs. Anita to hide her restlessness of expectation from the sharp eyes of her daughter.

She must laugh at herself how she is behaving like a schoolgirl. A rendezvous! What does it mean? It is not the first and perhaps it would not be the last, except—and that is just the point—that Dr. Werner in his advertisement emphatically expressed his desire of marriage. In that case, certainly this might be the last rendezvous of Mrs. Anita—end of a hitherto life of longing and beginning of a new existence by the side of a man with whom she had now almost fallen in love...... At last she feels relieved as the time comes to go out.

'At six o'clock under the arcades near the cathedral,' was said in his letter. Punctually at six o'clock Mrs. Anita stands near the cathedral and looks carefully from a side-street. She wanted to have a look at the partner of her rendezvous without her being seen. Really there is under the arcades a gentleman strolling to and fro and looking out from time to time and eyeing the ladies passing by.

He looks surely better than he is on the photograph. Still more energetic, younger—perhaps too young. Mrs. Anita finds that she has kept herself long enough in hiding.

As she turns round the corner and walks towards the arcades, instantly she sees her daughter on the opposite roadside. Hastily she returns to her place of observation to let Liliane pass by without noticing her. It would have been embarrassing if her daughter found her at a rendezvous.

But Liliane does not pass by. She crosses the street, comes under the arcades and looks at the big shop-windows of the fashion store. A few seconds later, the tall man comes near her, politely lifts his hat and addresses Liliane.

Mrs. Anita cannot hear what the two are talking. She only sees how her daughter is surprised by the stranger, how the gentleman talks to her more and more eagerly and how she first hesitatingly and then warmly replies, how the two finally begin to smile and get absorbed in a conversation and stroll away.

Mrs. Anita had understood. She goes home and waits for her daughter.

The girl returns home later than usual. She seems to be absent-minded and brooding. During the dinner and still some time afterwards they cannot come to any real conversation. Then suddenly the girl makes a dash and says with a curious brightness in her looks, 'Mummy, I must make a confession to you. Imagine, a gentleman talked to me today under the arcades near the cathedral. I do not understand how he knows me but he called me by my name. I had not the heart to turn away from him—he was so pleasant. So I allowed him to accompany me a little and we talked to each other as if we were old acquaintances. Finally he asked me for a date and I said yes! Was it improper for me?'

Mrs. Anita smiles, and her daughter is too absorbed in her own thoughts to notice the sad expression of this smile.

'My dear child,' she said, 'if he is a decent man then there is nothing objectionable. It would be best if you invite the gentleman to our house and introduce him to me. I hope I would like him as much as you like him.'

Liliane is happy over the manner her mother has treated the affair. 'I am so happy, Mummy,' she

said, 'that I do not require to keep any secret from you. You understand everything so well—like a real friend.'

'Of course, Liliane,' said Mrs. Anita, and stroked gently her daughter's hair. 'We shall never have any secret between us.'

She had almost said 'never again', but in the last minute she succeeded in suppressing this little word which would have betrayed her.

'It is no wonder that we understand each other so well,' said Liliane. 'Externally we look so similar, isn't it true?'

Mrs. Anita smiled and said, 'It is easy to mix up but you are only twenty years younger than me and that makes a big difference.'

A short look in the mirror shows her face hardly any longer similar to the photograph taken a few years ago. She realizes now that the rendezvous which did not take place this evening is really her last—of course in another sense than she expected. She knows that her future role in life is no longer the role of a woman who searches her own happiness. What

will count more from now on is only the happiness of her child.

She notices the happy radiance in Liliane's features and all at once she is no longer sad. Perhaps it had been lucky, she thinks, that she replied to that particular advertisement. Would she have come to know him otherwise?

KARL SPRINGENSCHMID

The Angel with the Caramelle

Reno was almost a man. In any case there was already a little sprout of black hair under his nose which indicated that soon he would grow a real moustache—grand and stately like the moustache of Garibaldi. His voice was also becoming manly. Only when he was shouting the names of newspapers he sold, his voice appeared to be like that of a cock that tried to crow for the first time. Yet smaller boys on the street tried to imitate him as he was their hero. His bag full of newspapers and magazines was heavier than the bag of the postman before the Christmas as he used to shout 'Avanti'...'Popolo'...'Corriere'

It is nice business—good business full of excitement inspite of all the troubles. One must be there alert and quick. Every second was worth gold. This slow train to Bologna brought the best business. Because faster the train more hurried were the passengers, and more hurried they were less newspapers they bought. If there was time Reno could read the

faces and could guess what newspapers they wanted. The fat man there with the red tie should buy 'Unita' and the slim man with the soft eyes must buy 'Messagero' and the gentleman with the gold framed spectacle must read 'Mondo'.

Of course here and there he was not always correct in his guesses. 'Oh! Not that Mondo my young fellow, I want the Stampa.'

—Here is the 'Stampa'! Sir.

—Did I say 'Stampa'.

—I meant the 'Oggi'.

—Here is 'Oggi' Sir.

—Thirty Liras. Sir, Oh! that is fifty? Here is 20 back—10—one moment Sir, and another 10. Oh! Then the passengers were not in a hurry and they were patient till he had given them back their small changes.

But since a few days there was competition for Reno. It was not one of the smaller boys who used to worship him as their hero and imitate selling news papers. Reno could easily handle them. No it was something that made him more angry. It was a young girl—slim with high shoulders, with a small pale face. Her name was Rosetta. He thought she was a small girl

although she was almost as tall as Reno—quite a young maiden. A small basket was hanging from her neck with a broad strap. She almost carried a shop full of sweets. As the train entered the platform she started shouting 'Biscuits'.. 'Chocolate'..'Caramelle'....

It was not a competition in the usual sense and yet it damaged his business. Because so long he was alone, the whole train used to hear only him and his newspapers. But now Rosetta was roaming on the platform and began to shout in her sweet singing voice. The male passengers could no longer think of 'Avanti' or 'Corriere' when such a sweet young girl was walking up and down the platform selling Caramelle.

It was best not to take any notice of the little competitor. Rosetta must not believe that she could do better business than him with her stale sweet stuff. It was such a comic sight to see her dangling a shop of sweets. It was better to treat her as a child. He was a man and he was carrying a manly business. His newspapers talked about Politics, Party, War and Catastrophe. It was not for a young small girl to compete with him. When Rosetta was shouting 'Biscuits'..'Chocolates'..'Caramelle'..through the

windows of the front bogies, Reno was at the other end of the train shouting with the double force 'Avanti' ..'Popolo'..'Corriere'. But the soft sweet words 'Biscuits'..'Chocolate'..'Caramelle'..resounded in his ears day and night even when he was tired and asleep on his indigent straw sack. Formerly he used to dream only of the title pages of the illustrated magazines. But now he started dreaming of Rosetta and her sweet—sweetest things she sold.

Then one day something terrible happened.

Just now the 'Direttissimo' entered the platform. One minute past four. Only three minutes stop. Then it will vanish.

Rosetta was just climbing the steps of the platform. She was pushed by a clumsy heavy porter—pushing a loaded wheelbarrow—a devil of a porter—not a human being. He was in such a hurry that he did not bother what happened. Rosetta was knocked down. She got hurt as she fell on the plastered steps and could not get up any more.

Reno was running on the platform. The people were shouting for his newspapers. He saw Rosetta lying helpless on the ground. Her right knee was already bleeding. But there is no time for sympathy

because the 'Direttissimo' is not going to wait. He throws his bag, runs hurriedly to Rosetta, lifts up the basket full of sweets, hangs it round his neck, storms to the train and shouts 'Biscuits'..'Chocolate'..'Caramelle'....

As the 'Direttissimo' left the platform Reno searched for Rosetta. He found her sitting on a bench behind the baggage room. She was sitting there alone and weeping. She had put a handkerchief on her wounded knee. She was looking miserable.

Reno gave her the basket.

She lifted her head. 'And your newspapers?' asked she.

He just made a little gesture, 'Oh! These newspapers.'

Then he gave her the proceeds. It was not very little. But small tears appeared in her dark eyes. Then appeared a smile on her lips. She looked at him. She thought he was a handsome young man—this Reno was almost a man. Could he be tempted by some sweets?

With hasty fingers Rosetta opened a pastry overlaid with chocolate—the most expensive that was

in her basket. It was called 'Talmone'—one piece costing 120 Liras.

With a smile she offered it to him but still she was not sure. His eyes were blank and serious.

Reno took the 'chocolatepastry' and put it indifferently between his teeth as if he was smoking a cigarette. Then his face brightened. It was noticeable that he had not tasted such sweet 'chocolatepastry' before.

Then he gulped it all at once. 'I know something sweeter than this' he said to her with a deep manly voice. He smiled at her as he had very often seen such smiles in the cinema.

'And what was that?' asked Rosetta, with a mischievous look.

'There is something that tastes sweeter than your chocolatepastry.'

'Sweeter than my chocolate?' asked Rosetta and her eyes brightened. 'Is there anything?'

'Oh! Yes,' said he and just kissed her. But it was rather a sudden affair as the basket was between them

and he had no practice of kissing. Frankly speaking to him the 'chocolatepastry' tasted sweeter than the kiss. But by God he should not allow her to sense that. After all he belonged to the menfolk and must kiss the girl.

Just now another wretched porter was passing by with two yellow suitcases in his hands.

Reno looked at her bandaged knee.

'Will you be able to walk?'

'Oh!, Yes.'

Then he took his bag with the newspapers and Rosetta took the basket. They were walking in steps towards the train and began in a dual voice. It sounded like a sweet duet as they showed their goods and shouted: 'Avanti'..'Biscuit'..'Popolo'..'Chocolate'..'Corriere'..'Caramelle'....

MAVIS HEATH-MILLER

Scandal in Cafe

'Good Evening, Monsieur.'

Andre had been always polite and he almost bent to the ground as he greeted me.

'It has been a long time since you have been in my Cafe Martineau last.'

I smiled.

'Yes, it has been good five years. I had been almost round the globe. Only today I have arrived in London again.'

His eyes brightened.

'I feel myself flattered Monsieur. You have done me a great honour by visiting my small cafe after five years'.

'My dear Andre,' I said, 'I can not imagine that I can forget your cafe. Where can one find after five

years an elegant cafe like yours and get such excellent food?'

'I will find for Monsieur a good table,' replied Andre. He guided me over the red carpets to a table in the corner. I admired the memory of this little Frenchman who remembered the taste and likings of his customers even after five years. Hardly had I taken my seat the bearer appeared. I selected something as one could not get better dinner in any other restaurant in London. I stretched myself on the back of the chair and started looking around.

Yes, everything was as before. The walls had been freshly painted. Everybody in London knew this little restaurant whose inside was painted red and white. Everything appeared so pleasant and familiar to me.

But still I felt that something had changed. Something was not there. I noticed that a familiar face was missing. Yes, the director of the orchestra a short-statured man with flowing black hair was not there.

Just now Andre was passing by me. I called him. He hastened towards me with an anxious look. 'The fish,' he asked me. 'It is not so nicely cooked as you expected.'

'No, it was excellent. It is something else that disturbs me. Where is Carl?'

Andre lifted his shoulders almost to his ears and stretched out his hands. 'Oh! He has gone away. We are so sorry for that.'

'Gone away. But where and why?'

'Back in his home in Budapest. It is a sad story. It grieved me a lot. '

'Is it such an unpleasant story that you can not tell it to me?'

'Oh! No Monsieur. I did not want to say that. I would very much like to tell you this story. You knew Carl very well. He was also very fond of you. Is it not true?'

I nodded my head. I just remembered all the details.

'Now as you know, the ladies were all very fond of Carl. He looked always so sad. He could not speak a single word of English, just a few broken words. The ladies have often invited him to their houses for playing at parties and functions.'

'He must have been also very fond of them,' I said.

'I doubt if he liked the invitation Monsieur. But about the ladies--that I do not know. He was always—as I want to say—a little aloof.'

'Carl appeared to me a very considerate man.'

'Yes and No.' Andre shook his head. 'If he was really so considerate he should have stayed in Cafe Martineau. But let us finish the story. The ladies were charmed by Carl. Specially one of them very much. She was a rich American. Not so young but yet very beautiful. You understand. She used to come here everyday and used to sit there.' Andre pointed his hand towards a table next to the orchestra platform. 'She used to invite Carl through the bearer to drink champagne with her. Very often he accepted these invitations in his aloof pensive manner, which impressed the lady. She used to sit by him and watch him eating some good food. You understand.'

I understood it quite well. I still remember the looks of many ladies when Carl used to direct the orchestra. The ladies were simply charmed and one could at times discover fire in their eyes.

'I was very happy,' continued Andre, 'when she presented him a golden cigarette case. I did not know the lady and perhaps it was not true. For a week she came everyday. The bearers used to laugh stealthily and the customers started gossiping. It was not going to be a very pleasant affair. Then one day my God! I will never forget that.'

'What happened? Tell me more.'

'One day at lunch time Carl came with a lovely young lady to my restaurant. A lovely lady Monsieur. You understand. But not belonging to the type that one meets in Cafe Martineau.'

'Very natural.'

'Yes, yes. That is the correct description. There was a nervous smile on her face. Carl took her through the restaurant to the table next to the orchestra. Carl had just to get down from the platform to sit with her. You understand. He was only on the platform when he directed the orchestra, but for the rest of the time he was sitting with this young lady. They used to talk and laugh. Carl looked almost a different man. I felt happy that he got somebody to speak in his mother tongue. I called for Henry and

asked him who was the lady. Oh! Henry said—she was Carl's wife. I was a bit perplexed. You know Henry—he is our head bearer.'

I nodded my head.

'He knows all the customers that visit my little restaurant and he knows everything that happens here. He told me that Carl's wife had arrived from Hungary, the same day. I approached them and stretched out my hand and greeted her. She smiled slightly but she also appeared to be aloof and shy like Carl.'

Andre took breath. I had the feeling that he was coming to the climax of the story.

'That day the American lady did not come. I could always notice if some of my regular customers were absent. But the next day my God!' Andre again shook his hands.

'Carl was directing the orchestra and his wife was sitting at the table as the day before. It was lunch time and the Cafe Martineau was already full. Suddenly the door opened and the American lady entered. She was elegantly dressed as always. She glided her way to her table. As she was passing by Carl he lightly bowed. All the guests looked at her.

'Carl had just ended a piece and bowed to the audience and got down from the platform. She thought that he was coming to her. But he turned his face away and went to his wife. He took his seat there and then started talking and laughing. Both of them looked so happy. The American lady was biting her lips. Her face became red. I had the feeling that she was going to break into tears. But she took out a pencil and wrote something on a card. She called a bearer and sent the card to Carl. Carl read the card and then put it in his pocket.

'All the guests had been observing the American lady. She got up and walked towards Carl. He also got up and bowed a little. A glass full of wine was on the table before him. She raised the glass and threw the wine on his face. Then she opened her handbag and took out a handful of bank-notes and threw at him. Monsieur, it was the biggest insult that was inflicted on a man in my presence.'

'And Carl's wife?'

'Oh! Monsieur she was silently sitting and smiling. The bank-notes were lying scattered over the table. One note got stuck-up in the fold of her

hat. I had been running this restaurant for 16 years. But I never experienced such an incident.'

'And the wife?' I insisted. I was coming to the end of my patience.

'She was just sitting there and smiling. And we came to know only later.'

'I do not understand,' I said. 'What did you know?'

'That Carl's simple wife was blind.'

A new guest had just entered and Andre hastened away to greet him. Andre knows how to look after his customers.

LORENZ MACK

Heart Needs a Little Tonic

This summer Stella drove towards the south. She had miserly saved the whole year to lie under the sun for three weeks and to swim at the beach and enjoy herself—this is all that she had been dreaming for years. Stella was lonely and not very beautiful and also not very young like other numerous working girls in the city. She used to sit at the typewriter, take down dictation, prepare her morning coffee in a dark rented room and wash her own clothes.

She had no more illusions. She saw life and knew how it will shape—a beaten track without ups and downs, always narrowing down, coming to an end without anybody cropping up. But just now Stella did not want to think about that. There she was sitting in an Italian bar— coloured lamps and Chianti-bottles were hanging from the roof and the walls and between the tables a few pairs were dancing to the music of the guitar.

When she looked through the window she saw the dark green sea and the sky full of stars. She lighted a cigarette and was really happy. She had still fifteen long nights and fourteen days full of sun, sand and water before her. It was wonderful and really so wonderful.

At the bar were sitting two men—eating the olives with the toothpicks. They were drinking from small long glasses and looking at the dancers in the mirror. One of them was young slim and dreamy, and the other had broad shoulders and grey hair. Both of them were looking so friendly. Stella put the glass between her fingers and was enjoying the magic sweetness of the music. She thought happily—it was exactly so as she had dreamt. Her eyes sparkled a sense of satisfaction. The young man got down from the high stool and came to her. He also smiled.

'Will you have a dance with me?' he asked and threw his cigarette on the floor and pressed it with his shoe. Stella was a little taken aback but she got up. He put his arm round her and drew her close with gentle care and affection. She was tall enough just to reach his shoulders. I must apologize to him—I have not been dancing for years—I am stiff like a wood and treading on his feet, she thought.

But he said softly, 'You are a wonderful dancer' and it sounded so sincere. She became light like a cloud and was always looking at the coloured scarf that he was carrying round his neck stuck with his collar. The man with the grey hair sat alone with his back to the bar and saw them dancing. With a smile he showed his white teeth and nodded as they came near him.

'I am so happy—it is quite alright, children,' said he and thereby blinked his left eye. Her first reaction was that they were enjoying her company. But the young man turned his head a little aside and said to her, 'He is my friend and we are spending our holiday here.'

'I also,' she said.

'That is so wonderful,' he said with a smile. 'How do you like Visanta?'

'Good, very good,' she replied and looked at his face for the first time. There was something in him that made her so happy. He was so free and friendly. Stella thought that she could laugh and enjoy herself with an abandon. She made him feel that she wanted to dance more. After the dance the young man brought her to the table.

'May we have the pleasure of your company?' asked he and simultaneously came the gentleman with the grey hair showing his white teeth.

'We decided to spend the holiday in Visanta,' said he, 'my friend was set on that and now we are stuck-up here and we are bored to death'.

'It is still wonderful here,' said Stella and felt that the eyes of the young man were resting on her.

'Perhaps you are right,' sighed the grey-haired man. 'But without the telephone, newspaper and my daily nagging I feel myself dead.'

'You poor fellow,' smiled Stella and then danced with him and then she danced with the young man more and more till the guitar music came to an end.

'How wonderful that you are here!' he said. It was very hot and she was feeling very tired. He noticed it and with his arms clasped her tenderly.

'Shall we meet here tomorrow?' he asked and she felt a warm breath from his mouth.

Stella nodded yes and naturally yes, as she wanted it so much.

For the remaining hours of the night she was sitting before the small mirror in her hotel room. She put her two hands on her face and looked at her. 'Stella,' she said to her reflection. 'Stella! how is it in Visanta? Wonderful! It is really wonderful.'

But the face in the mirror did not look very young and fresh and it was not also very beautiful. She could change her hair-style as she wanted. She could improve her make-up by a little more lipstick and darker eyebrows but would she look better? Would it bring some fundamental change? In her entire life she was always the second and the third. A man had never kissed her out of love. She had already got reconciled to a lonely life. But now with one hit it was all so different. Visanta was heaven and Stella wanted at least once to be in heaven. No matter it was barely for a dozen days. And the sun in Visanta was setting every evening and then appeared the moon—dancing on the muddy waves of the sea. Lips of the young man were kissing Stella's eyes and cheeks and the hair on her neck. And he said, 'I love you, I love you.'

She closed her eyes. The hours passed as sand between her fingers. She stopped the watch and turned the face of the calendar towards the wall. But still the days in Visanta without any mercy came to

an end and often were Stella's pillows wet from her tears.

'What will happen later?' she asked Mirko and looked at his face. The boat was far from the shore. He was playing with Stella's hair and was winding it with his fingers.

'As it is now,' he said, 'so it will be for ever.' His words sounded so playful and light as if he had no worry.

'But how will it come?' she doubted. 'We live hundreds of kilometres away from each another.'

'What does it matter?'

'Ah! Everything,' she said, 'everything. You will forget me as I am not so beautiful and a bit old for you.'

He put his hand on her mouth.

'Listen,' he said, 'you are the most beautiful girl for me. I love you.'

And Stella believed it.

'Will meet again,' he consoled her.

'When?' she wanted to know.

'Soon,' he said 'soon.' And the wind was singing in the sails and seagulls were playing round the boat and Stella was the happiest girl in the world.

The next day came the ship. Stella was standing at the railing. It was drizzling in Visanta. Stella saw only Mirko. He was at the jetty—his red scarf was shining. He raised the hand and shouted 'very soon' and his lips gave the sign of a kiss. Stella responded and closed her eyes.

'Very soon,' she murmured. 'Very soon.'

As she returned to the city, entered the cold room and later sat before the typewriter, she only saw Mirko before her and heard him saying 'very soon' 'very soon.' She again closed her eyes and smiled. She thought it could not be longer but still she was in heaven once in her life. She will never forget it and the life within the cold walls of the city will in future be very much lighter.

In the Visanta bar whose walls were covered with reedstraws and whose lamps and ceiling were decorated with coloured Chianti-bottles two men were sitting. One was young, dreamy and slim, and the other had broad shoulders with grey hair.

They were putting olives in their mouth with the toothpicks and were drinking from small long glasses.

'I have been able to get out only three hundred,' said the young man. 'This was all that the old virgin could spare,' and he brought out the money from his pocket and gave half to the man with the grey hair, who rolled up the notes and put them in his pocket.

'Time is good but the season is so short,' said he. 'You must be more prompt and get out more money.'

The young man with a sad look put the glass between his fingers and thought of Stella—the old maiden from the distant city. She had really deep sad eyes and when she wept—he noticed that she had also a heart. It was a dirty affair—the whole thing a damned trickery, he thought. He gulped the drink and lifted his shoulders. 'Do not be sentimental, my young fellow, business is business.' At this moment the grey-haired man at his side blinked at him with his left eye as he saw in the mirror.

'How would it be with the fifth table back left side.'

The young man swallowed the olive and looked in the mirror at the fifth table back left side. A lady was sitting there alone. She was lightly beating her fingers on the table and was feeling bored. She was not the youngest in the crowd but she was wearing a shining armband and a pearl necklace. Her eyes looked wistful and thirsty. The guitar music started and the bar was full of dancing pairs.

'O.K.' said the young man and got down from his high stool and glided his way to the lonely table.

'May I have the pleasure of a dance?' he asked the lady and threw his cigarette on the floor and pressed it with his shoe.

'Oh! Yes,' said the lady with the pearl necklace and got up. The grey-haired man at the bar waited till they came dancing before him and blinked his left eye and said, 'I am so happy, it is alright, children.' He took the glass and emptied it in one gulp—to the health of the lonely young lady.

HEINZ PIONTEK

Evening Between Five and Six

Laura was waiting before a broad glass windowed front of the big office building. She knew that Ernst was now in a room on the third floor. The rows of windows were glistening in the late afternoon sun. She looked up if she could see anybody. The tuft of her hair was dark blond slightly raised—a little too heavy for the small face. The face was quite striking. It had very fine well-proportioned features and a hard manly forehead. She wore glasses. Her dress was not very ordinary although not new and the big handbag had delicate folds.

She was waiting for her man for nearly half an hour. One could notice that from time to time hot shivers were flooding her face which looked rather red due to excitement. Near her was lying a suitcase. She left it there and turned to the next street at the crossing. She could see from there the clock on the tower of St. John church. It was a little before five—she felt that her life was like the heavy mechani-

cally moving metalled indicator of the clock. Everything was at the mercy of time but the future could not be foreseen at least just now.

The suitcase was lying in its place and behind it stood Ernst with his head rather drooping low. She knew everything. The last steps appeared difficult to her. Then she gave outburst to her excitement and anger. She said, 'Why did you come into the world?'

The man was a little younger than her and had a briefcase under his arm. He threw a fleeting glance at Laura.

'The people are right and it is so pitiable.'

'So,' she said. 'So pitiable!'

'I wished I could be furious.' He lifted the suitcase. They went down the street slowly and silently without looking at each other. The sun was shining and it started drizzling. One could see in the light that the rain drops had seven colours. But the rain just stopped and a few pigeons were flying in the soft evening air.

Ernst put the suitcase down. 'Where are we going?'

'How do I know that!' she said rather calmly. 'Let us go to the railway station,' he said. He hated the station. But round the big courtyard there were enough benches—one could sit there without paying and could just think over .... What should he think over? The judgement was already given and there was not any chance of appeal.

They were married for half a year. Ernst said that he was a writer and Laura believed in his talent. And now the writer was derailed. The only publisher who had so far showed interest in Ernst's work did not want to publish his novel. Laura's savings were all finished, her man did not earn, they had received notice to vacate the room in which they had lived since their wedding. The suitcase and the two handbags contained all their possessions. These were the facts.

They reached the railway station: the plastered courtyard was full of travellers, parked taxis, trams and newspaperstands. On two sides of the courtyard were old trees. The man pointed out to a vacant bench. They sat down there after she had rubbed the seats dry with her handkerchief.

'Without talking we cannot go very far.'

'Do you believe we shall survive?'

Her question shocked him. He had never seen Laura so frightened since they had been living together.

'I think we shall,' he said doubtfully.

Laura looked at Ernst for a few seconds as if she was examining him. Then she said, 'I will tell you the truth.' But she did not speak any more.

'You mean the end.' The soft and yet youthful features of his face stiffened. 'Good, let us speak over the end.'

'I did not love you when we were married. I thought you were a poet, and I wanted to help you become a greater poet. I wanted it for you and for me and have sacrificed everything I had.' She made a little pause. 'I wanted it firstly for myself,' she added. 'That is the truth.'

The man became pale. He turned his look on the ground. After a while he said: 'And I also did not love you. I am very grateful to you that you have made it possible for me to work for half a year in peace.'

'Now I do not believe any more that you are a poet,' she said.

'It is now meaningless,' he said.

Their shadows were becoming longer and it was becoming darker. Islands of clouds were floa ing in the pale grey sky.

'Here in this station the separation would be somewhat mechanical. It will be easier for us than in any other place.'

'Do you want that we should separate?' she asked.

He lifted the shoulders 'Have we not already come to that?' he asked.

'What will you do?'

'I must first of all think. In any case I am not going to marry again.'

He looked at her if she was laughing. 'I have also done with marriage.' Suddenly he turned towards her. 'Richard,' he said hurridly, 'what do you think? Shall I not ring up Richard once?'

'Is he not the designer about whom you spoke to me earlier?'

'How could I forget him completely! Surely he will help us, Richard does not leave anybody in the lurch. He has a little house in Kefling. I am going to ring him up.'

'I thought we had no friends.'

'Laura! We could live there for a while.'

'What sort of house is that?' she asked. Her small face brightened.

'It is a house with a garden not big but with two guest rooms and one verandah full of flowers and plants. There we had been sitting always in the evening and it was so wonderful in the fading light and even the dust looked so fine and green. Behind the garden there is a pond which looks so beautiful through the twigs. If it is too poetic for you in Richard's house there is a fine bathroom, a refrigerator and a big cellar where fruits are stored. You must be thinking about wine—no Richard does not drink any wine, he does not drink at all.'

'I could help with the household work,' said Laura.

'He will not allow that as he is a little old-fashioned for that. He treats his guests as if . . . . . '

'But I love to do it,' she interrupted him. 'You know how I love household work.'

'Good,' he said, 'I will be just returning.'

'Ernst, you must forgive me that I have behaved so foolishly a little before,' she shouted at him.

He disappeared in the station building. Laura looked at the courtyard over which the traffic was flooding. She noticed neither the whirlpool at the crossing nor the crowd at the turning. She saw herself standing in a white clean glistening kitchen and the green garden light coming through the window. And then in the bathroom the water was pouring into the white clean bathtub and she heard Ernst whistling his comfortable feeling. But the newspaper boy appeared near her and shouted the latest news in the evening sky and all the pictures vanished and she awoke from her dream. But she thought: 'I have always loved him. I will always love him. It was only the nerves but he will forgive me.'

It was becoming cold. She remembered her life in the last few months with all the details. Whenever she thought about the works of her man she felt a delicate pain behind her forehead which also

warned her about the reality. She thought if he was not a poet what did it matter! I must stand by him till he stands on his feet. Every man needs a little ground to stand on his feet and Ernst will also get that. I am going to care for that.

She looked at the station clock and it struck her that just before an hour she did not know what was going to happen. Did she now know more?

'Richard has gone on a holiday,' said Ernst. 'I have spoken with his maid-servant. He is now in Italy and will return after four weeks.' He took his seat on the bench and just stared vacantly.

'Gone?' repeated Laura.

'And now you have finally enough from me.'

'Do not talk nonsense,' said Laura. 'You should not imagine that I lose my head for such thing. Come, let us think over. Perhaps I can ring up somebody.'

'Yes,' he said slowly. 'You can telephone much better than me.'

JOACHIM RASMUS-BRAUNE

Black Doll Without a Name

It was quite hot in the meadow and the hay was also dusty. The blacksmith was wearing only his blue working trouser. He was working with his hayfork and the maid was also keeping pace with him. She was a strong woman, quite hardy and did not talk much.

The blacksmith balanced the hayfork with the hay in the air. 'There is a Negro in the city, Mette,' he said.

The horses were stroking the brakes with their tails as the buzzing sound in the air excited them.

'I know,' said the maid.

The blacksmith threw the hay with a jerk on the wagon. Then he left the fork sink in the hay and looked at the maid. On her neck under the hem of her highly tight dress one could see the muscles. He looked for a new bundle of hay and lifted it with his fork.

'Does it not interest you?'

Lifting her head from the haystack she replied, 'No.'

He left the fork on the ground and put his big hands in his pocket. 'Formerly you were quite interested.'

Her stack flew on the wagon. The horses were neighing restlessly and the air was buzzing in the sultry heat. White stars in the sky were dancing before Mette's eyes. 'Yes,' she said. 'Formerly.'

The blacksmith bent down and left the fork. From beneath he said rather indistinctly, 'You are only three years with me, Mette.'

The maid bent her head backward over the shoulder and threw the stick in the air. 'Frankly,' she said in a friendly and grateful tone, 'three years, me and the child.'

In the main street the schoolgirl Patrizia was walking alone. She had black curly hair. That was too thick on her small head and her skin glistened, like the colour of black coffee. Patrizia was walking along the houses and was looking anxiously from time

to time. But there were no strange children in the nighbourhood and nobody shouted anything bad at her. The children were all gathered before the hotel 'Schwarzer Adler', which was a big blue skyscraper with the American name plate on the door. Patrizia wanted to get into a side street. Suddenly she saw a Negro coming out of the hotel.

For the first time in her life the black coffee-coloured child saw a Negro.

Patrizia hardly noticed that the street children did not shout at her, rather retreated lurking from her. The church clock was striking the hour in the sultry air of the street but Patrizia did not hear. As if in a dream she just came in front of the Negro. She knew now that she had very often this dream.

The Negro was standing at the staircase, a little higher on the street. He wore an elegant light green suit and on his wrist glistened a big golden watch. Behind him was standing the porter in all courtesy with the name card in his hand. 'George Brown, Planter, Monroe, Louisiana, USA', was written on the card and the porter received one mark as tip. George Brown stood under the sign board 'Schwarzer Adler' which was freshly painted. 'US Army

Sergeants Mess' had been housed in this building for years. The porter at first was surprised that the Negro wanted Room No. 17. Only 17 and no other. He was also surprised that the Negro spoke German very fluently.

Now the Negro saw the coffee coloured child. He got down from the stairs and smiled. Patrizia also smiled at the Negro as if she was dreaming. She forgot that she had been taught for years to address elders as 'You.' She forgot the strictness of her mother about it. She forgot all that was behind her. 'Art thou a Negro?' she asked.

'Yes,' said the Negro in a serious and harsh voice, bent down and looked at the little girl in the eyes. Her eyes were deep, dark brown and the pupils had a little blue glimmer. The eyes glistened blue and moist.

The Negro George Brown stretched his hand and Patrizia clasped it. Before he could understand what she wanted, she put her little fingers touching his big black rather thin fingers. She compared the finger nails and found that his finger nails were short and perfectly polished.

She just embraced him with a determination. He did not object. The people were passing. The heat was gruelling. The child and the Negro did not notice anything.

Nobody bothered to notice them. 'What is your name?' the Negro asked.

'Patrizia,' she replied with deep confidence in him. She was forbidden to mix with strangers but Patrizia had forgotten everything.

'Patsy,' said the Negro 'will you come to my home?'

'Where is your home?'

'In America, my child. In a far off land where the cotton fields are like a sea. Big ships glide in the river and the men sing at the bank because God's blessings flow through the Mississippi. That is the name of the river. Do you know that?'

Patrizia moved her hand a little away and the Negro's hand also moved. 'In your country,' she asked, 'are there children like me?' Spontaneously she touched her hair with her hand.

'Naturally,' smiled the Negro but again became serious. 'Many and a whole lot. There are schools

where only such children go. And always there will be more children born Patsy.'

'That must be beautiful in your country,' replied Patrizia rather sadly and again clasped the Negro's hand. 'It is beautiful,' said the Negro and for a moment was just choked in his throat. 'Tell me,' said Patrizia with a blank satisfaction in her eyes and the Negro told her. He did not know what he told her. It was as if he was playing with his trumpet in the evening—a music monotonous and beautiful like the music of Mississippi. And Patrizia recognised it as she has heard it in her dream but she did not know it.

Slowly the day was passing. The mist was coming out of the fields and it became quite sultry. The gnats were dancing in the meadow and their buzzings were heard in the air. The hayfield was empty. The wagon was moving away from the field. On it were sitting the blacksmith and the maid. The horses knew the way home alright. The maid was sad and silent.

'I will not be hard with your child,' said the blacksmith.

'Not you but your mother,' replied Mette angrily. 'Do you mean to say I hsall have hell on

earth?' The blacksmith had a stalk between his teeth. 'She will die one day,' he said quickly. 'All will die one day, Mette come to me, Mette I cannot stand it any longer.'

At the end of the field there was a cross which they passed by. Mette murmured something and bowed. But the blacksmith did not notice it.

'Then wait till she is dead or take another woman who does not bring with her a bastard.' The wagon was passing through the woods. The blacksmith touched Mette's shoulders. She pushed him away and took the reins in her hands. She knew that the strong blacksmith lay crouched helpless on the hay. His mother was a strict woman and he was always frightened of her.

By this time the Negro and the child reached the blacksmith's place. 'We stay there,' said Patrizia. 'The old woman is always angry. I have a secret, shall I show it to you?'

'Yes,' smiled the Negro at the child in her shabby dress. 'Show me your secret, Patsy.'

Patrizia ran into the stable, sweltered a little in the hay and came back with a doll. She held the

doll with her bashful hand tight on her apron. It was one of those dolls which a man receives as a prize by shooting at target in fairs. The blacksmith had given this doll as a present to the child as he once returned rather drunk from a fair and forgot all about it. Patrizia showed it to nobody. The doll was black.

With big expectant eyes Patrizia looked at the Negro with a repressed shudder in her entire body. The Negro put his long hand on her head. He could not speak. He remembered that in his country the dolls of the little Negro children were white. With a tender gesture he caressed the child and the doll.

Slowly the wagon with the hay was moving. The swelter in the air was unbearable and the hay was crackling. The maid saw the Negro and the child from a distance. Mette suddenly got down from the wagon. The Negro and the child were completely absorbed in themselves and they did not notice the hay wagon. Patrizia held the doll before the Negro. 'You can take it with you,' she said with almost tearful eyes. 'I love it very much but here it is not good for it, you take it with you.' The Negro viewed the black doll and then said, 'I will also take you

with me, Patsy. You and the doll. What is it's name?'

'It has no name. I could not show it to anybody.'

'It will have a name, Patsy,' the Negro said.

Mette reined the horses. The blacksmith saw the Negro and the child and the doll which he had forgotten and he looked at Mette with wide open eyes. His thick head grasped gradually what his eyes saw.

Mette looked at George but in her eyes George appeared only in khaki uniform with three angles on the arm. And she saw Patrizia lovingly clasping his neck. She became jealous of her child just now and also loved her for the first time. For the first time in her life she loved her Negro child who just now did not care for her white mother.

In her head everything was in a tumult. She had betrayed her own child and she was going to have a new child—white and after that all white children she threw herself in the hay and was murmuring, something inaudible. But the blacksmith understood it.

The old woman at the window saw the Negro and the child on his knee and then saw her son and the maid. Trembling with old age and excitement she opened the door. Everything had already been decided.

MARGOT HERRES-KREUTER

Angelika Returned so Late

He came back and nothing had changed. He himself did not know exactly what sort of change it should have been. It was not just what he had expected. He himself had so much changed that he was convinced that the whole city would also change with him. And yet he was just surprised that it was all exactly as it was ten days ago: the same impersonal railway platform with its stream of dull and eager passengers, the old man with a little shop hanging on his belly and the blond girl at the newspapersta'l both serving the passengers with the same sullen faces, the same weather-beaten poster advertising that this was the best coffee in the world and the same swinging door that used to creak every time it was opened. And there the same active city on the river and a late evening sun setting over the railway platform—and the same indifferent rushing crowd. He was lonely and nobody seemed to take notice of him and that disturbed him. It appeared to him rather unfair to have success and yet there was nobody to share the joy with him.

He suddenly thought rather warmly of Angelika. What a luck it was for him that there was Angelika.

While thinking about her charming smiles, he crossed the narrow streets towards the port. Finally he entered a rather dark corridor and touched a calling bell at the stairs. The door opened and light came out. Mrs. Borge heavy and fat as always came out of the open door to the main room and Robert received his key and a letter. He put both of them in the pocket and went upstairs.

Smell of cigarettes smoked long ago met him. The windows were closed. The table was full with applications, books and cuttings of advertisements for vacant posts. Drops of water were leaking from the walls. The room on the roof was just cold and unfriendly as always.

Robert did not notice it. For two years he had never noticed it. Even if he had noticed it, it was perhaps of little consequences. The rent lease was still in his briefcase and it was for the room as it was. That was the only thing that counted. His real luck and happiness were contained in the letter in his hand.

Angelika wrote that she was fedup of waiting eternally for him. Lastly there were other men also

who did not fail to make advances. What did he think of himself? For a beautiful girl like her it was not necessary to be entangled in such a hopeless case. So she has decided to marry Walter. To Robert she wished 'Good Luck.'

He read the letter twice. As he read the letter third time, he noticed that his cigarette was cold. By the fourth reading the room on the roof with a dark hole and the smell of cold cigarette, paper and wet floor were unbearable. Good Luck! . . . . He put a scarf round his neck and came down the stairs. He passed aimlessly the dark walls of the houses and came to the port at the river, strolled about an hour while a pale moon was reflecting in the water. As it became further dark he slowly walked back to the city.

She herself opened the door. She was wearing a tightfitting long pant and red sweater. Looked really beautiful as he had always remembered her in memory. Her light blue hair tied with a silkribbon looked rather silvery in the half darkness of the passage.

'Hey!' he said rather happily.

'Will you not leave me free?'

As he stood before her in the drawing room and saw the books and the matress behind the chairs, he

felt that there were some knots in his throat, and he felt so uneasy.

'Here,' he said and stretched out his open hand.

'Stones?' she said. 'Shells for me?'

'I was down the river.'

'Oh!' she said.

'We had not been by the river for a long time,' he said with a smile and came near the bookstand. 'Don't you remember?'

He had just noticed that his photograph was no longer on the bookstand and instead there were some dark roses with long stalks. The painting of Camargue was not also hanging on the old chest. They together had bought this painting in a rainy spring day. He remembered exactly that it was a rainy spring day. She had said then that every day was not equally good to buy a painting. Painting reminding a rainy spring day makes the dry day livelier. She was determined to carry the painting herself because it was bought by her first earned money. They were going through the damp streets and she was carrying the painting and every time she changed the painting from one hand to the

other, she was putting one hand in his pocket to warm it up. And after she had met Walter the painting was no more there. In place of the beautiful magic painting of Camargue was hanging a pencil sketch and on the bookstand stood the dark roses with long stalks.. Robert suddenly wanted to laugh. She was very thorough. Half measures were not for a girl like Angelika.

He put his hands in his pockets and withdrew.

She was standing under the light and watching him. Her face was pale and blunt, the eyes hard and determined.

'Have you not received my letter?'

'No.'

'I have sent you a letter,' said she in a determined tone.

'Oh!...I have returned an hour ago. Perhaps there is a pile of letters. I have not yet spoken with Mrs. Borge.'

'You had been away.'

He turned around and went again to the roses. It was not so simple as he had thought. He remembered

that he had waited for two years for this moment. Two endless years in this endless city! That meant oppressive heat, a dirty sweltering room, rainy nights and months of bitterest cold without enough sleep, without the right food, months of endless waiting that he had put up with only for this moment.

'I have fallen in love with Walter,' said she triumphantly.

..No not this moment! He turned towards her.

'Very good,' he said happily. 'You could not do anything better. Do you know, I think highly of him...'

Her eyes widened into astonished looks.

'And it was also not right with us. Is it not? Just now it is not so when I have got a good job in the Research Institute and I must leave the city.'

'Robert...'

'Yes, that is why I was away. Don't you know? The interview and the examinations the usual things. I must have told you about it, I believe. It does not matter that you have forgotten it. Really I understand thoroughly that you could not have believed it.'

—She took a step towards him.

'Think only,' he said without hesitation, 'I came here only to say good-bye and all this time I was anxious that you would take it to heart and I would make you so unhappy. Is that not very comic?'

She put her arms round his neck. . 'Now I am happy that I will not be a coward anymore!'

'But I have not forgotton it! I will explain to Walter everything. Please my darling! I was just stupid.'

'But no,' said Robert with a smile. 'You have done the right thing. You suit each other very well.'

She stamped the floor with her feet rather angrily. 'I told you that I was stupid! I had no idea about your job. I mean. .'

'It is alright,' said Robert again with a smile.

'You will not understand me! I was angry with you and therefore. .I will come with you. You do not mean what you have just said. I will come with you, please Robert.'

'Angeli! I cannot agree to that. I know how much you love this city and the river. . Think once more of the river down there!'

'But I love you.'

He was watching her with a smile.

'I will break the engagement!'

While walking down the river and brooding over her letter he thought how she would react to his reply. It was frightfully exact as he had imagined.

'I am so proud of you!'

And she was blind enough not to notice it. He loosened her arms from his neck and held her tight. His lips touched her cheek in a fleeting kiss.

'We will have a wonderful time, Robert. I knew that you would make it. As regards the letter it was a joke, you know it.'

'Goodnight, Angelika and wish you the best!'

He pushed her away and took his overcoat from the hanger and closed the door from behind. He could hear Angelika sobbing inside. He ran and as he came on the street to the port, he slowed down his steps..A car came in front of him and a girl waved at him. From a door was heard the music inside a bar. He went inside and orderd a drink. The bar was crowded and the band was still worse as they had

heard about it before. The heat made him stagger— 'One more please.'

Angelika? She has received her lesson. And after all who was she? A girl like anyother. But he was no more an unemployed chemist. He was now a Research Assistant with a fixed salary and interesting work. The prospect of a career and a nice small house—but all these did he need any more?

No. It is all useless.

He was dreaming. With a rude shock he returned to reality. Blood was hammering in his temple and it was rushing into his ears. Everything was dancing in a rythm with the swinging lights of the ships as they were softly moving on the water. As the man with the horns was warning about the fog in the river, and as the cold fog went through his clothes, he just lost his consciousness.

How unlucky he was....

ISABELLA NADOLNY

Flight to Cairo—20-45 Hours

It was a beautiful day from the meteorological point of view that came to an end—sunny dry and a little windy. As Angelika turned into the main street, the chain of golden street lamps spread a violet colour in the sky.

She was happy that it was just six in the evening. She had worked the whole forenoon like a 'healthy mule' as her grandfather used to describe her and had to iron a heap of clothes in the afternoon. The Kindergarden was not to be taken over by Sabinchen before autumn. Angelika had to answer innumerable foolish questions from little children and clean the entire place every day after they had left. On top of this there was the regular daily household work.

The teacher of her sons had also gone away, her smiling requests failed to persuade him to help her with the children in the Kindergarden before the Easter.

Both the acquaintances who promised to help her had decided otherwise. Besides all this work Angelika had to look after three dogs, had to feed, take them for walks, and as a result she had little time for herself. The plumber who wanted to repair the water connection in the kitchensink, had also smilingly replied that it was too over-burdened. The young lady must still try. So he had asked her to buy an unshapely rubber pump for pumping out the water. It was too much for her to buy this odd-looking rubber pump and carry a bag full of oranges and other daily provisions through the crowded city.

Through the tender silhouettes of the trees, beamed the neon lights of a Espresso bar on the other side of the street. Before she could really think over if she needed a little drink to feel fresh, she was already inside the homely warm small room of the Espresso bar full of coffee smell.

A man was turning over the pages of a newspaper sitting by a marble table and next to the entrance sat a lady with strong make-up with her face to the door. Otherwise the bar was empty.

Angelika put her packets on a stool and sat by the bar. With the whizzing sound of the bubbling coffee

machine her sense of irritation already began to disappear. While she was thinking if she would order a piece of apple cake with the coffee or she would buy a packet of chocolate for the children, a tall figure with a broad overcoat entered by the door and sat by her and asked, 'Would you like to have a cognac with me?'

Angelika looked shocked and blushed red. It was quite clear that this man did not know her but nevertheless she must have seen him somewhere. But she had decent manners to decline the offer when her eyes fell on the wall mirror behind the barstand. Just a week back her friseur said that she had wonderful hair and the friseur did not tell lies. Apparently Angelika experienced a little thrill. In this little bar surely she did not look like a brave mother of a family—it had also something to do with her beautiful fur overcoat—which had deceived the man. In any case it would have been silly to behave like a homely hen. 'Why not?' she said as coolly as possible and lifted the eyebrows unnecessarily.

The man in b·ight costly overcoat looked at her directly and smiled as she looked at him. 'I am a stranger here,' he said as if that excuse was enough. The cognac was served in small round glasses. Angelika warmed the glass between her two hands and

smelt. The man lifted his glass and gave her a look in her eyes and took a long sip. Actually it smelt like wood she thought but then the people were drinking it all over the world.

She looked at the whitewashed wall on which was painted a panorama of distant cities in between creeping plants and trees, and for a second she just felt cheerful. 'I am also not from here,' Angelika heard herself saying.

'I came here only to warm myself. I was at the winter sport in St. Moritz, will fly back this evening.' Angelika touched the glass and her eyes were on the man. He did not smile but nevertheless exhibited friendly interest. He looked quite decent if it could be figured out. Where could she have seen him before?

'I live in Cairo now,' she said incidentally. She became highly conscious of the sweet possibilities of this play.

'Ah!' said the stranger showing interest,' where then.' Angelika looked at her glass.

'I—I have no home here. I—live at present in Shepherds Hotel,' she said softly. Her words

appeared rather sad to the stranger and he said quickly, 'Oh! There you live all alone?' Angelika nodded firmly.

'Yes,' she said, 'quite alone without the family.'

'Now it has also its good side. No botheration, no household drudgery and no children for considerations.'

'You are an artist, is it not true?' asked the stranger seriously and went on. 'Yes one can notice that at once, excuse me. Are you really cut for this profession? Excuse me. I have no right to ask but it interests me for a special reason. You must be travelling from city to city and you are not happy as you cannot settle in a place. Are not the hotel rooms all equally dull like the trees on the lane? Would it not have been more beautiful and satisfactory for a person like you to have a man and children?'

'Now,' said Angelika quickly and almost in a retort. 'Every man in his place. But then what do you do for example?'

The stranger did not reply at once but ordered more cognac. 'I,' he said at last as if in a dream, 'I am a typical office employee who goes out of the house in

the morning and returns to his charming wife in the evening—takes two and three dogs for a walk and on Saturdays mows the grass in the garden.'

Angelika did not accept that without any contradiction. 'You do not look so,' she said distrustfully. 'Children, you have none?'

'Children?' asked the stranger as if he was awakened from a dream. 'Yes, yes children also—approximately seven!'

'Terrible!' said Angelika as if she was shocked. 'I mean terrible that you do not know exactly how many and you sit here and drink cognac with a completely unknown lady. Peter would never...'she did not complete the sentence.

'What more please?' asked the man. 'One more cognac revered lady?'

—'No, many thanks,' Angelika said with a determination. She was feeling terribly embarrassed with the tender-looking rubber pump, and that she was flirting with a father of so many children though only through suggestions.

'Once more, many thanks, I must take leave now.'

'Yes, naturally,' the man said and stood up and nicely bowed. 'You should not miss the plane.'

Angelika had almost dropped her several packets from the stool. The rubber pump wrapped in newspapers looked so ugly. No it did not matter anymore, what impression it made. She remained just indifferent as the man picked up the packets and gave them to her.

'Good luck,' he said sadly and few wrinkles appeared in his eyes. 'Think about occasionally that the greatest attraction cf a profession is not the luck when the heart is empty—I hope the kitchensink is in order again—of course I mean the sink in Shepherds Hotel.'

Angelika smiled a bit confused but said a hearty good-bye. She found that this man was more sympathetic than he was half an hour ago. She came to buy a rubber pump and then she came accross this fat man in the Espresso bar and he looked like an actor from an Italian film. She did not show any further consideration to him but felt a bit relieved and went out in the half dark street. A light wind was blowing and touching softly her shopping bags as if it would carry them. At the first tram-stop she saw the big poster of a film

in which she noticed the face of the stranger he had just met.

The Director hastily entered the bar and shouted putting his hand on the barstand, 'You are hiding here Bill, and we are searching you everywhere. We have just sent the luggage from the hotel to the airport. What do you want to drink? Again a cognac. Then we must leave. It is already late but we have time just for a coffee. The plane for Cairo leaves at 20-45 hours.'

'I know,' said the other man sadly as if in a dream, and took the last sip from his glass.

H. MARTIN

The Doctor's Call

Dr. Georg Stey was looking through the reports of the patients and was writing comments. Suddenly his wife entered the consultation room. It was rather unusual as she never disturbed her husband when he was busy with his patients.

'A telegram for you, Georg,' Hilde Stey said rather apologetically. 'It has just come.'

Dr. Stey just nodded and took from her the little folded paper. As he got up and glanced at the contents of the telegram, he looked rather anxious and yet disturbed. He gave the telegram back to his wife. 'Look at that.'

Hilde Stey also read the few words in the telegram: 'In difficulties. Urgently need 200 Marks. Please send money by telegram. Explanation follows in letter—Richard.'

'What does the young fellow think?' asked Dr. Stey in a rather bitter tone as he looked towards his

wife. 'Sends me a telegram and simply demands 200 Marks just as it is—does he not receive a good monthly amount with which he can live a comfortable life?'

Mrs. Hilde became silent. She thought of her son Richard who studied medicine in Munich. She just remembered the usual happy carefree look of her son and became worried what could be the difficulties in which her son was landed.

'What is behind that?' Dr. Stey asked in a heavy tone. He knew that his wife could hardly explain that. He became rather excited and started stamping on the floor. 'How has he finished the money I have already sent? For what purpose does he require so urgently 200 Marks?' He talked while stamping and looked at his wife. 'I do not like such thing, Hilde.'

'He has certainly done nothing bad,' replied his wife rather hastily. 'Perhaps—a little foolishness which he did not want to disclose. You know Georg that our son is not a bad boy.' Dr. Stey nodded with an angry expression.

'Naturally I know that. But I want to know what is behind it before I send him 200 Marks. After all it is quite a bit of money.'

Mrs. Hilde's face became a little pale.

'You are not going to leave him in the lurch, Georg,' she said in a trembling voice.

Dr. Stey nodded his head.

'No, Hilde, that is not.' He reflected for a moment. 'I will myself drive to Munich as soon as I have finished with my last patient. Luckily it is Wednesday and the chamber would be closed after lunch. If everything goes alright I can drive to Munich and return in the late evening.'

'Do you mean that Georg?' Mrs. Hilde's voice sounded rather doubtful. 'Then I shall prepare everything.' She went to the door and opened it. 'But you will give him the money, Georg, isn't it?'

The Doctor had again taken his seat at the writing table. 'Let me see,' he replied casually. Then he started again to look through the reports of the patients.

It was almost 3 o' clock by the time Dr. Stey could finish his work and sit in his car for driving towards Munich. Unexpectedly there were quite a few patients towards the end and it lasted a little longer than the Doctor had anticipated.

But as he tried to drive very fast on the Autobahn he could hardly overcome a peculiar nervous feeling. He was thinking of driving very fast. He thought about Richard who needed his help—what was the trouble with the young fellow? Why does he need the money? Was it not better to send 200 Marks by telegram? Why could he not be a bit generous at least once with his son? Why did he stand on his paternal authority and wanted to know first why Richard needed the money? Had he forgotten so quickly his own student life?—How often he had wished then that his own father was a little more generous with money!

'What is the use of these thinkings now?' murmured Dr. Stey as he gave a little more push on the accelerator. 'There is no sense now in going back.—In less than two hours I will be in Munich. Then we will see what has happened.'

The high speed of his car gave him a feeling of relief. He felt that at least he had done everything in his power to reach Richard and help him as quickly as possible.—But then the worry and anxiety again over took the Doctor. What could really happen to Richard? 'Betting.' This idea also went through the head of Dr. Stey. He reflected: is it not something usual

nowadays? He answered the question affirmatively rather unwillingly. Surely nowadays a young fellow would enter a club and spend out all his money. But Richard? Could something like that happen to Richard?

Richard was not a bad boy, certainly not. But now and then he tended to act very foolishly which was quite usual for his young age. If he had really got drunk and done something foolish he would certainly repent when he became sober. Dr. Stey again thought about 'betting'. But he also thought of the possible steps he would take to cure Richard of such bad habit: removing him from the University but then that will be the end of his professional education and end of all the hope he and Hilde had built about his future.

All this worry and anxiety got hold of the Doctor so much that he became almost panicky. His hands at the steering-wheel became moist. 'Richard,' he uttered. 'Richard—I must help my son.' He was their only child and the more he thought about him the more nervous he became. But his car was picking up speed and the Doctor did not seem to be quite aware of it. 'I must run to him,' he thought in excitement. 'I must help him.' It appeared to

him that his only wish was to meet Richard quickly like a thunderstorm. 'Everything will be in order,' he thought anxiously, 'if I can reach him in time.'

Suddenly he saw from a distance before him a car that was parked at the edge of the Autobahn and simultaneously he also noticed the motorcycle of the Autobahn service standing nearby. 'An accident,' he could at once understand and noticed a big signboard which a man was holding up on a pole. 'Doctor Wanted' was written on the signboard. Dr. Stey had then fully grasped that here was a case of serious accident.

'Doctor Wanted,' was written in bold letters on the signboard which was being shown to every car passing by. The black letters under a visible cross was an appeal and more than that, it was a command direct to all and more to Dr. Georg Stey.

'Drive away,' thought Dr. Georg Stey rather excited. 'No use stopping. Richard is waiting for me and he needs my help.' Yet simultaneously Dr. Stey knew that here was a man who also needed his help—his help as a Doctor. 'Perhaps he is bleeding there and perhaps he will die before some other Doctor comes to his rescue,' thought the Doctor as his car

was speeding away. 'Surely another Doctor will soon pass by,' he thought rather anxiously. 'And perhaps the injury of the victim is not so serious. Perhaps the ambulance car has already been alarmed and will come in a few minutes.'

And all the time the words 'Doctor Wanted' were clinging in his ears reminding him of the oath of duty which he took while receiving his degree as a young Doctor. He was groaning and biting his lips. His fingers on the steering-wheel became wet. 'Who knows how long it will last if I start looking after the injured fellow,' he thought with the last attempt to ease his conscience. 'And Richard is waiting for me. I must help him. I must.'

By this time he had reached the signboard 'Doctor Wanted'. He passed by it and saw in a twinkling glance how two men were trying to help the wounded lying on the ground. At this moment his thoughts took a sudden turn and the reactions in his body were automatic. 'Help,' he thought. 'Help.' 'A man is in danger and I must help him.' Simultaneously his left foot touched the gear and his right foot gave a heavy push on the brake. He felt that the car made a sudden cracking noise. But he was all happy over it that he had at last succeeded to act like a respon-

sible Doctor. He heard the cracking noise of the tyres which appeared to him like a sound of victory over the evil. The car skidded a little but then it stopped.

Doctor Stey took out the instrument box from the back seat and came out of the car. He started running. After a while he was panting but he was still running. He did not want to lose a moment. A man whom he wanted to help was waiting for him.

'Are you a Doctor?' the man asked as Dr. Stey reached the place of accident.

Dr. Stey nodded his head silently. He knelt over the injured man who was lying motionless on the ground. And then the Doctor was shocked.

His son Richard was lying before him.

It was a few seconds but it could be also eternity by the time Doctor Georg Stey realised that he was the Doctor and the injured fellow was his son. He thoroughly examined Richard of course in terrific hurry. He passed through a nightmare by the time he examined and found that it was a case of moderate brain-concussion. Richard was out of danger of death so far he could understand.

'And almost I was passing by.' Murmured Doctor Stey all the time as his son was being driven in an ambulance car to the nearest hospital. He himself was sitting next to Richard and was looking anxiously at his face as Richard lay unconscious. The Doctor nodded his head. 'Life is so strange,' he was murmuring. 'And sometimes we have to make such a difficult decision which surprisingly brings out the best in us.'

Richard recovered quickly. He had caused an accident in Munich with his motorcycle, and slightly injured another motorcyclist, and he was going to be prosecuted, but was let off by the police only on the condition that he would pay to the injured fellow 200 Marks as compensation by the next day. As he had not yet received the money from his father by 4 o'clock in the evening, Richard believed that his father had refused to help him. In his anxiety and impatience he was again driving his damaged motorcycle to his house to bring personally 200 Marks from his father. As he was taking a sharp curve at a very high speed, his motorcycle skidded and he was injured.

Dr. Stey paid the 200 Marks. He did not say a word to his son because he believed that even without warning Richard would drive more carefully in

future. And was it not a fact that the man and the Doctor in Georg Stey learnt a very vital lesson of life from the whole affair?

W. ALTENDORF

A Poet in Uniform

I do not know if she was really called Malinka but that was the name we gave her. She had a sonorous Tatar name, which sounded so deep like the sea and intoxicating like wine, but none of us could pronounce it correctly. The little Bay of Baltiman is situated in the West of Yalta, far behind the chapel on the hills. In clear weather it could be seen from Sebastopol. I still remember that it was the year 1942, when the Russian grenades ignited by the battery stationed in the fort of Sebastopol, destroyed this place and turned it into rubbles. But luckily the beautiful coloured chapel escaped from any damage.

A chain of steep rocks was rising from the Bay. It was a wonderful sight when the rocks changed their colours as the sun used to rise. I believed that it had something to do with the peculiar humidity of this locality.

The feet of the rocks were being washed by the Black Sea—the sunny sea deep blue with white beach

on which the waves were throwing up limestone pebbles. The crabs were playing on the beach. Overlooking from the top of the hills at the sea one could see dolphins playing on the water. The cypress trees which were a source of livelihood for the people broke the monotony of the sea and all sorts of flowers magnolia, oleander, pomegranate grew wild in the gardens most of which were left neglected. One can also have here Crimean wine. It is red like blood, sweet and intoxicating. For such a wine one can pawn himself. It was like a beautiful dream—the sea, the rocky coast of Yalta with innumerable villas, the half hidden cloisters with wordly activities, the Tatar mosques and the olive groves.

We met Malinka for the first time in one of these small villas. All the inhabitants had fled away as the partisans became active. The mountains were glittering in the sunshine. Malinka had stayed back. To us she appeared like a small exotic doll with blue black hair. With her sharply chiseled typical Tatar eyes she smiled at us, by showing her pearl-white teeth.

As we used to come back after laying the mines she used to stand at the terrace. As we climbed up

the zigzag path, panting and gasping with our heavy equipment she used to greet us with her smiles.

It was a hearty homely atmosphere for us, and she made us all homesick. Of course we were always homesick but we got used to it quite unconsciously. I had taught her how to serve food on the table—the dishes and the spoons, forks and knives, all arranged in order on a white table-cloth. Our food was brought in thermoboxes, from the kitchen of the battalion.

We had laid mines on the coast like a belt and there was hardly any place that was safe. We only kept a small place free where we did not lay the mines as we used to take our baths there. This little safe spot was a great responsibility for us. We marked this spot very well with our own signs so that we did not step on our own mines. Naturally I had shown this spot to Malinka. We did not apprehend any trouble as she was under our complete control. Moreover she used to hate the partisans who had driven out her own people. The tailor attached to our battalion designed colourful costumes for her. He also made a bathing costume for Malinka, which she just adored. All of us used to swim together and lie on the sand, and she taught us how to catch crabs.

There was also a poet in our company. He was a young fellow still in his teens. One could notice from his eyes that he was always dreaming of something or the other and perhaps mostly of his far off native land East Prussia. He was yearning with excitement always for something. He composed poems and read it to us. His poems were full of ideas. Whatever he saw or felt he put into verse. To us his poetry was as intoxicating as the Crimean wine—fathomless and mysterious like his native land or like the eyes of Malinka. The beauty of the landscape worked like wine in his blood. It was the contrast that fascinated him.

Malinka was a part of this landscape—the cypress trees and the flowers—the natural spring in almost every courtyard—the foams at the crest of the waves washing the shores. Malinka also was in love with him. She was touched by his verses although she could not grasp all that he had said. We could all feel how much they were in love with each other.

One day we received the command to leave the locality. We had to part from this paradise—this quiet spot in the whirlpool of fighting—this beautiful island of peace in the sea of hatred. It was like forgetting a beautiful dream. We had packed our

belongings and sat for the last time in the evening on the terrace before a final farewell.

Farewell from whom? From the sea? From the Bay? We all felt how painful the farewell was. We had no idea what was in store for us in the future. But we all knew that the winter weeks that we had passed here would never come back in our lives. These few weeks had been so unreal, so dreamy and so quiet.

The poet was sitting as usual next to Malinka, looking morose with his face towards the sea reciting new verses. These verses appeared to us more passionate than before. He spoke about everything which we all felt although we were not so conscious. That evening we had been drinking wine till midnight in order to forget the pangs of coming separation.

Next morning before it was daylight our poet had disappeared. Malinka was also not to be found. The small sailing boat which we used to keep in a little protected corner at the beach was also not there. The few belongings of the poet were not to be seen. Only his rifle was left on the sand.

We then realised that he was so sincere in his verses when he had described that he was born in his

former life in this very land to which he had returned never to go back. It was his best poem in which he told his tale. A tale? We had then thought that it was just a good poem—a wonderful idea. But little did we realise that it was the confession of his soul, and not just a dream.

The Russians by this time had occupied Fedosia and that delayed our departure. Simultaneously came the command to lay mines on every empty place on the beach. It so happened that in Fedosia our soldiers had laid mines on the entire beach except a small spot where they used to take their bath and catch fish. The Russians had entered Fedosia through this spot which was free from mines. So we had to lay the mine belt all over the coast sparing not a single spot.

We had also to report to our higher command that the poet had deserted. There was considerable interrogation of all of us and we could not absolve us of our responsibility of this desertion from our rank. We had been discussing and speculating over this incident. Where could the poet with Malinka in that small boat go? They might have luckily crossed the mines laid in the sea by the Russians or might have hidden themselves in the jungles of Yalta, always

frightened to be discovered either by the partisans or by our patrols.

We had also been discussing if it was permissible for a poet to neglect his duty, and run away from the responsibility to live a life of his dream. To barter a life of conflict for just a dream! But it was impossible for us to hate him for what he had done. He was so different from us. He resembled Malinka in so many respects. And finally we came to the conclusion that he had never belonged to us like Malinka, who had been all the time a stranger in our company.

One night suddenly two mines loudly exploded. We at once took our rifles which were lying beside. But nothing more happened during the rest of the night. In the morning we saw the small boat on the beach, and two dark bodies that were lying on the white sand. We had already sensed it as we found Malinka and the poet both dead, looking ghastly with splinter wounds.

What had brought them back? We could never find it out. Was it the hunger or the fear or just a yearning to return to this paradise? We buried them in a common grave. We fired three shots as we buried them—three shots for a Tatar maiden and a deserter. What more could we do?

PHILIP WIEBE

The Seductive Melody

Gilda leaned back on the small comfortable leather chair, crossing her slim beautiful legs, and was playing with the unused white paper-napkin. The head waiter stood at our table, with his head bent towards us in a silent manner and asked in a pleasant voice, 'Sir, what would you like to drink, after the soup?'

Gilda lifted her head, smiled at him, and looked at me for an answer. I looked at the small Hungarian band that was playing on the platform and said, 'Naturally Tokayer.'

The head waiter nodded approvingly and said, 'That is a good choice.' He rubbed his napkin over the white table-cloth and then went silently to the buffet.

We were silent. Gilda threw an earnest glance at the paper-napkin, which she had already folded into

three corners with her nervous fingers. She was again folding it trying to make it look symmetrical.

I lighted a cigarette. I was pondering why I came with her again into this restaurant. It was meaningless and neither the Hungarian band nor the Tokayer could change anything. Everything was over between us. It was just over.

'Give me also a cigarette!' Gilda said suddenly. I offered her the packet over the table and looked silently at her face—the face that looked radiant as I lighted her cigarette. How often I had lighted her cigarette—had enjoyed looking at her eyelid sinking and her tender nose, somewhat excited slightly as she started smoking. Yes, Gilda was beautiful, and I noticed that she looked still more beautiful at such moments, but I felt that my passion for her was gone. It was the end.

The waiter brought a bottle of Tokayer and two glasses which he filled upto the half and skilfully put them on the table. 'To your health Sir,' he said, and bowed slightly, and disappeared behind the columns.

We were drinking the wonderful wine and were not looking at each others' eyes as before. I was

cbserving the directcr of the Hungarian band. He caught my glance and smiled at me. The bandmaster was a stately figure, a typical Hungarian. His hair was black but at the shoulder it already started growing grey. He might have been fifty. His moustache looked so pleasant. As regards his violin play he was a real master.

'The band is good, is it not?' Gilda said softly.

'Yes,' I said. 'There is no better violin player than the Hungarians.'

She turned her face towards the band, and I observed that the bandmaster had already smiled at her. Gilda looked embarrassed, and started smoking her cigarette nervously.

At this moment the Hungarian got up from his low platform, and went round the tables playing his violin, but most of the tables were empty. Here and there he remained standing for a while, but I noticed that his glistening eyes were all the time focussed on Gilda.

He was playing an Hungarian melody full of passion and melancholy and it did not seem to have any beginning or end. After he had glided round all the

tables he appeared at our table at last. He bowed to Gilda without lifting the violin, gave me a fleeting glance and then stood beside Gilda. By slightly raising his violin from his shoulder, he directed his other colleagues of the band—a cembalist and two violin players to change to another melody. The cembalist decided on a different melody, and the two violinist responded. The bandmaster threw his head a little towards back, put his violin carefully on his shoulder and then gave a little bow to Gilda. Then in a clear tone he started a melody, which developed quickly into a wonderful tempo. It was really a magic melody, and the entire restaurant appeared to be hypnotised. The few guests present became all silent and sat quietly. The head waiter leaned on the column and was looking at his shoe. Everybody appeared to be charmed by this wonderful music. I had been to Hungary for a long time, and had the occasion there to listen to the Hungarian and cowboy melodies, but never before had I heard such a wonderful music.

It could not be described—a melody without any pattern and without any recognizable notation! Gilda was sitting still, her head a little lowered with her hands closed. But after a while she lifted her head slowly, and I felt that she was already overtaken

by passion and longing. The face of the Hungarian was also tense, and his eyes had some magic power, and they were directed at Gilda all the time. She tried not to meet this penetrating look from the Hungarian. But I felt that she was just powerless.

Suddenly their eyes met, and the bandmaster gave an embarrassing smile, and gave his melody another direction. Unconsciously his shoulder was raised and the melancholic Legato tune changed into a touching Stakkato. The long brown fingers of his left hand, were dancing in a fast whirl on the griff of his violin.

I made an effort to have a sip from my glass, to have a diversion from the melody, but it was not possible. The Hungarian was raising his tempo in an unbelievable speed, and Gilda's lips were trembling as the Stakkato again changed into a sad Legato without any effort. The melody appeared to be a long sobbing trying to express all the pangs of the human heart.

I did not know how long it lasted. It might have been half an hour or an hour. As the bandmaster suddenly ended the melody in a triumphal climax, I put my hand breathlessly in my pocket, in order to give him a gold coin, as was the custom in Hungary, but he looked away from me. And then happened something which just shocked me. The bandmaster

bowed deeply before Gilda, softly nodded his head and Gilda stood up feebly. He caressed her tenderly with his arms, and without noticing me both went towards the platform, and then disappeared through a door leading to the cloak room.

I was sitting thunderstruck. Then I noticed the head waiter coming to me, and whispering in a hushed voice. 'Please remain calm, Sir, it does not help but you will not see the lady so quickly again.'

'How?' whispered I as it was dead silence in the bar. 'She is my bride, really my bride, you understand? I will call the police!' I wanted to get up but the head waiter with his two hands pushed me in my chair. He was smiling mischievously. 'Police—what should the police do? If you allow me to say, the lady need not be your bride. You should know, that I have experiences of human affairs, and I must tell you that it looked as if you really wished, to have your last meeting with the lady today. Is it not true?' He lifted his eyebrows seeking an answer but I became silent and then he continued: 'Mr. Oetvoes will just come back—of course without the lady. Till then you drink this fine Tokayer.' He lightly cleaned the table-cloth and then disappeared. The band again began to play another melody.

I could not think properly, but as I regained a little self-control I felt that there was a terrible unknown pain in my heart. Gilda, my blond Gilda, who was sitting with me just a few minutes ago was gone. For a complete year we had been together. It was Gilda who has made my life. She had helped me to attain success after I was doubtful about my talent as a painter. Today my paintings had been put up in many exhibitions and most of them showed a beautiful slim lady with sharp features—Gilda. Patiently she had stood as my model for hours and put up with my awful temper which often overtook me due to technical difficulties. Gilda had consoled me in my moments of depression, and had again celebrated my success with sincere joys. It was a wonderful life, and thousands of little episodes came to my memory, as I was calmly drinking my wine. But then I realised, that she was now together with this damned Hungarian, and a terrible feeling of anxiety, doubt and jealousy overtook me. I had a feeling that it was all due to this devilish melody. Gilda was very fond of music, and was easily charmed by a good melody, but something happened to her, which I could not comprehend, and I only realised that Gilda was a victim of this devilish melody of the Hungarian. I thought of the violinist Paganini who was reputed to possess such a

mysterious power in his melody. But I still knew one thing definitely, that Gilda belonged to me, and I loved her still and by no means it could be the end today—rather on the contrary. I unconsciously touched the paper-napkin on the table, with which a few minutes earlier Gilda's small fingers had played.

Suddenly I felt a bit terrified, as I heard a clear violin melody coming from the small room. The bandmaster was standing again on the platform, and looked at me as I threw sharp killing glances at him. He raised his shoulder and looked at me and then put the violin on the desk and came to my table.

'Oetvoes,' he said with a deep voice, 'Sander Oetvoes, please let me introduce myself,' and without waiting for my answer he sat on Gilda's chair. 'Where is Gilda?' I asked breathlessly.

He made a surprising move with his hand and said, 'She is called Gilda, that is a sweet name and it is so appropriate for her.'

'I must know, where she is! Tell me now,' I said in a furious tense voice.

Oetvoes gave a fleeting smile. 'Before I answer this question, you must tell me if Gilda is a sweet name, and whether you love Gilda?'

'Naturally,' I said. 'But what is the matter with her?'

'It is not so natural as you are speaking with me—is it not? Please be honest, my dear Sir. You wanted to make an end today of your relations with Gilda. Please do not interrupt me. I know that you wanted that. I have seen enough in the world, to realize that it was the last evening you wanted to spend with Gilda. Gilda could not say anything about your intention, but somehow felt it. She was confused, my dear Sir, and really confused. I have at once noticed that she was in so much pain. I also realized that she was a charming lady with a soul—somewhat a rather rare thing nowadays. Believe me Sir, it is so rare.' He lighted a black Virginia cigarette, and was enjoying the smoke. And his big brown eyes looked directly at me, and said rather harshly, 'You love her, since when? Ah! I do not want to know that! But Gilda loves you sincerely. She loves you even now. I do not understand it, but she was mad for you. You do not deserve this, you silly fool!'

'If she loves me so much as you say, why has she gone away with you?' I asked in an exciting tone.

Then Oetvoes gave an obliging smile: 'All the ladies follow me when I play this special melody.

You will not understand that. But it is so. It is an old cowboy melody which has a mysterious effect. Many years ago a cowboy taught me this melody. He named it seduction.' He laughed so loudly. 'Yes, at that time I laughed at that. I thought it was a superstition, but then many years later I played this melody in a restaurant in Copenhagen, and then it was proved that this cowboy melody really meant, what its title signified. They were speaking as you were sitting today. He had the same look as you had this evening—evasive and rude. And she was terribly sad you understand, exactly as your Gilda. Yes, there for the first time I experimented on this melody. I played with all my concentration and ability, as I had seen the cowboy playing. Yes, and after that the girl stood up, and followed me exactly like your Gilda did this evening. I then realised that there was some truth, in what the cowboy had said. I also confess with all modesty that my appearance might have contributed something to the effect of the melody.'

He made a pause and was still smiling. Then he stood up, gave me a sharp look in the eyes and said in a firm tone: 'I have not utilized the situation, thus created by the magic melody—neither then nor

today. The young man had then married the girl on the next day. While I drove the young girl in a taxi to her house, he had a real time of pain and anguish. Your Gilda has no residence of her own, and she is waiting in your studio for you. Good-bye! My dear Sir!'

He turned round and went to the platform. The head waiter with his keen eyes hastened to me smiling: 'Now Sir, is everything in order?' he asked. I nodded. 'Please excuse the little comedy, that has been played here by Mr. Oetvoes. He said that it was the best for you.'

'Yes, surely. Please convey my best thanks to Sandor Oetvoes—I am his friend.' The waiter nodded his head happily.

I stood up, paid the bill and went out by the exit. A happy Stakkato melody compelled me to look back, and I saw the elegant handsome Oetvoes, his shoulders bending under the violin. His dark eyes glanced at me a mild warning. I bowed to him and went out in the street. Gilda was waiting for me at the studio. There was no time to lose.

C. FROBENIUS

Only One Year

'What would you like to drink?' asked the young man and gave the menucard to the young lady.

'I do not know exactly. Shall I order for coffee?'

'I would like to have some beer.'

'Beer—PAH!' She shrugged her shoulders. 'I would better have some coffee.'

'One coffee and one beer please,' ordered the young man to the waiter.

They were sitting at a small round table near the window. They were facing each other. It had been unusually sultry—although two windows were open. The sweat and the smoke from tobacco gave a very uncomfortable feeling.

Robert put his elbow on the table. He was thinking how he should begin. Nothing came to his mind. For several days he was having a frightened feeling how to speak to her about it.

Only this morning he had said to his friend Freddy—'When we pass a nice evening we feel so happy and we cannot but grudge an evening that costs us dear.' Freddy had replied—'Tell me when you have really spent such an evening.' He said—'I shall feel so relieved when it is really over.'

Now she was sitting before him and expecting that he would say something. He could not just begin. He heard the voices of others sitting on the nearby tables. Conversations about car accidents, drunkenness and taxes, etc. meaningless talks by strangers who did not know each other very well but yet were building castles of words, castles going up in the air but again breaking to pieces. The waiter brought the beer and said, 'Coffee is just coming.'

'Prost,' said Robert and lifted the glass to his mouth. It pained him very much that he did not know how to begin. He had thought over every word that he wanted to say, and also the answer that he expected from her. Everything he had planned but yet she was waiting for him to begin, and he could not make a start. He looked at the beer glass in his hand, but he had already forgotten everything. It was a very uncomfortable feeling and he started to grumble.

'Where is your coffee? Hallo, waiter, where is the coffee?'

'Coffee is just coming,' said a friendly voice from the bar.

'I hope he will bring it before the dinner.'

'Please, patience,' said the friendly voice from the bar. 'One moment's patience and the coffee is coming.'

Robert was again thinking that he could not just begin. He was cursing himself that he could not make it. He had been such a coward. But he must say it today. In any case there was no time.

'It is so,' he said and the lady looked at him.

'Listen,' he said. 'Let it be so. I wanted to order ice-cream'.

'One ice-cream please,' said Robert to the man at the bar.

The young lady smiled. 'The coffee has not yet come.'

Robert again took the beer glass in his hand. 'I do not know,' he said. 'Please do not get excited. Do you know already?'

'I can feel that you want something from me,' said the young lady and smiled at him.

'We must separate,' said the young man.

There was deep silence. The young lady looked at him and turned her face away.

'It is so. I have already made up my mind.'

'You are thinking of that?'

'I did not think that it would be so.'

The young lady said, 'What do we know of each other? We only know each others' names.'

'Then it is impossible that you are still thinking of that.'

'It is always so, when one knows only the name.'

Robert said, 'We know more of each other than our names.'

The young lady said, 'Yes, we are in love.'

'It is only one year Karin. I did not want to have an engagement before I have ensured a future for me. Please do understand.'

'You remember it only now?'

'It happens so often nowadays,' he said. 'And really it is not even one year, to be exact only ten months.'

'Yes.'

'I am quite serious. Believe me, I have not come to this decision light-heartedly.'

'Yes.'

'Karin, you are saying "yes" to everything but really you do not believe me darling.'

'I do not know what I really believe.'

'I am really serious, believe me please, that I am quite serious—please.'

'Let us not talk about it any more.'

He was quite nervous and worried. He thought he had made a false start and now she was not believing him.

'Don't you remember darling, how we had a good time in Seefelden?'

'Yes it was so wonderful.'

'And what a wonderful time we had also in little Ahornboden and Hinterriss.'

'It had been so beautiful.'

'Remember darling, that once before returning from our holiday the last evening, we were short of fifty marks, and we could not pay for our cigarettes and food. It was terrible but you said, "What is only fifty marks. You drive home and take fifty marks from my sister and send it to me by post." But then I found the money in my trouser's pocket. Don't you remember darling?'

She said, 'Let us not talk any more.'

He said, 'Darling Karin, it is only one year. It will be a year of trial for our love. I am sure we will still be in love.'

Karin sipped her coffee, which had been placed on her table by this time.

'So many things can happen in a year.'

'But the year will pass more quickly than you can realise darling. One year is not a long time, when a man has a mission to achieve.'

'You are all the same,' the young lady said without any excitement. 'You are not different from the others. In the beginning you speak about God, the world and about your loneliness, and when a young girl falls in love with you, either an examination or a sudden trip to the North intervenes,' said the young lady. 'It is all sweet talk. But you are all the same.'

'I have not said the something darling.'

'But you have done it.'

'What have I done?'

'That you know exactly.'

'But this way, it would have been so beautiful.'

'What do you want?' the young lady asked. 'We could dance or go home.'

'It is a pity that you do not believe me darling. I wanted to help you.'

'You better remain silent.'

'Then let us go,' Robert said and thought he must get himself drunk after this.

The waiter brought the ice-cream, but Robert pushed it to her. He paid the bill.

'Won't you take the ice-cream?' asked the young lady.

'I ordered it for you.'

'You take it—you like ice-cream better than me.'

'But you also like it very much.'

'I want you to take it.'

'Why should you not take it?' asked the young man.

'Let us go,' the young lady said in a gentle voice. 'I wish that you should take it.'

'You are very generous,' the young man said.

'Let us leave it,' said the young lady.

Robert pulled the plate near him and started to taste the ice-cream. He was thinking that inspite of everything Karin had been all the time gentle and generous. So there was no need to spend the evening by drinking. Karin had a small face, smaller mouth and small grey eyes, but she did not betray any feeling of anxiety.

He could look at her, and feel that she was quite understanding once he had said everything. But he

could also feel that she would not have left him. Only her smell would remain on his hands—a remnant of the evening. By tomorrow everything will be over. He wanted to have a last look at her.

'And the photographs? What will we do with the photographs?'

'We keep them naturally,' Robert said. 'After all it is only one year.'

But his voice betrayed that he himself did not believe it.

GITTA VON CETTO

The Meeting at Capri

This was the journey for which Melanie had longed two long years, counted her leave, saved her money and cherished all the secret desires of her heart. It was still drizzling as she took her seat in the train which was taking her to Rome, and further to Naples. But as the train was nearing the Italian border, the sky became suddenly clear and a warm sunshine came through the window, and fell on her face and the suitcase—containing all her dresses and costumes for holiday, which she had collected for so many months.

A fellow wanted to strike a conversation with her, but she spoke so little. The conversation did not go far, as she wanted to enjoy the journey silently. 'Long journey tires me,' she said. Her long journey was only from Munich to Innsbruck, but she gave an impression that she was travelling far towards Cairo or Rio de Janeiro. Until the train reached Brenner her thoughts were still about her immediate past—

the travel bureau that had arranged her holiday—the gigantic factory in which she worked, the moods of her bosses and the silly gossips of her intimate male colleagues. One of them was a bit too shy and the other was too clever but fundamentally both of them were so dull and unromantic although young and attractive.

Now her thoughts were looking forward to her days in Capri, where perhaps waited for her the romantic adventure—meeting with her special man under special circumstances. She almost felt it. She felt it also on her skin, which would look quickly so nut-brown and shining. Only lucky, independent, spoilt and rich ladies could afford to have such skin. Now nobody would notice in her the tired worried look of a moderately paid secretary. During the drive towards Capri the motorboat was bumping. The long drive and the heat made Melanie rather exhausted. There in front lay her paradise, she thought. The sun was throwing its shining net over the blue sea that surrounded Capri. At the little port where the motorboat anchored, about two dozen people—onlookers, hotel guides and donkey cart owners made a little crowd. Melanie drove in such a donkeycart towards the hotel. Her travel bureau had reserved this hotel for her. But it was too

expensive for her. In one day she spent as much as she used to earn for a week. But it was exactly as she had hoped for. Everything during her holiday should not correspond to her position. She thought she was not rich and affluent. But once in her lifetime, she wanted to give a new twist to her destiny which might take a different course.

In the evening, she was strolling rather restlessly inside the island as if she was looking for something. She looked for an exciting meeting with somebody— she felt that somebody at the corner was waiting for her. She took a glass of cold coffee at the bar in the piazza, pushed through the crowded lanes, did not bother if the dark-haired local young men stared at her. She leaned over the low walls covered with creepers and flowers for looking at the sea. There in the distance in Naples the evening lights were faintly visible—as if it was a small private paradise of stars of a millionaire.

In a small restaurant she again took some dark local wine and breathed the dizzy smell of the olive. A handsome young man with dark hair was looking at her with rather unusual attention. She caught his glance when he was trying to guess her nationality, her wealth and her morals. But as he opened his mouth

with glistening white teeth, and was coming to speak to her, Melanie called the waiter, paid the bill for the wine and went out. He is not the type for her, definitely not for her. The man for her was somewhere else in the corner. 'I will meet him tomorrow, perhaps the day after tomorrow or in three days.' Quite tired she returned to her hotel. Her eyes were closing and very quickly she fell asleep. She was wonderfully fresh next morning—and the sea, the hot air and her meeting with the stranger, all were waiting for her.

Two hours later she was lying on the beach. She felt so happy as she became conscious of her youth and her exciting swimming costume and the long holiday. Two weeks were an eternity. Young fellows were making advances, which were not indecent by the standard of beach etiquette, and older fellows who tried to befriend her appeared rather comic. Children were wonderful and a sweet music was coming from the nearby transistor.

A rowing boat passed by. It was rowed by a young man, with curling black hair and a small gold cross on his bare brown chest. He was whistling slowly through his teeth and smiled at Melanie. 'Signorina! Will you come with me?' He raised his brown

shoulders and made an inviting gesture. Melanie smiled back without any excitement. She thought, she would not meet her man on this beach. Somewhere else she will meet him, in a lonely and romantic setting.

In the evening she discovered a restaurant in a more romantic surrounding than the day before, and ordered an expensive delicious wine. She enjoyed the view while drinking. Her mind was still wrapped up in dreams, and returned to her hotel rather late and fell asleep. Once for a short while she was awakened, and thought of the big thing awaiting her but again she slept.

On the seventh day, she was sunburnt like a ripe hazelnut. Her dark forehead surrounded by hair like a twinkling crown, and her oval face became all the more softer. By this time her knowledge about the Capri island, and the delicious dishes in all the distinguished restaurants became quite remarkable. But the big experience she expected still did not come.

In the late evening she was climbing over the small rocks edging the sea. She had already enough of the beach ,with all its noise and crowd. The sharp stones were scratching her bare feet, and she reached

a small bay shaped like a heart—a little part of the sea. She saw little formations of salty rocks, which looked like empty broken egg shells.

As she had crossed the last rock, she noticed a wonderful little piece of beach, which looked like a carpet. In the middle of this little beach, was sitting a man silent and motionless, as if he was saying his prayers with his face towards the sea. Melanie saw only his back but it was a well-formed muscular and sunburnt back. She at once felt that this was the man she was looking for. Her heart started palpitating as she came down the little rock, and with cautious feet stood on the hot beach. Although she moved rather silently, being afraid that the man in his secret resort, would look upon her as an intruder—she noticed that he suddenly turned his face towards her with a carefree gesture. For a few seconds they were looking at each other in utter amazement, and both felt that the other was a creature from another planet. It was Melanie who gave out a little shriek, but it was a shriek between sobbing and laughter. 'I am not sure if I am seeing correctly.... Who could think of you here?'

It was Bert Heller one of the many young men working in the same factory with Melanie, who

looked smiling mischievously. 'A man must be sometimes alone, but here he is disturbed by his colleagues,' murmured Heller. Bert Heller was not the man about whom Melanie was dreaming all these days but slowly her reserved shyness gave away. They were swimming together in the sea and lying side by side on the beach under the sun. They looked at each others' happy refreshed holiday faces.

At last they realised that they were both hungry. They quarrelled over the restaurant, where they wanted to eat, as both of them in their lonely days before this fateful meeting, had discovered a good many excellent restaurants. At last they agreed on a place, and this evening they enjoyed their wine more heartily than before. Later they were strolling along a little wall and looked towards Naples and both were sorry that the Vesuvias had stopped its fireplay. It was a bit chilly, and they put their arms around each other and looked in the eyes.

As Bert kissed Melanie, he said in a coarse voice, 'That could happen to us only in Capri, isn't it true?'

She nodded rather seriously. 'But you made me search for you for a rather long time!'

'You also! I was really lonely all these days. Ihad been here already six days.'

'I had been here for seven days.'

She did not know what more she wanted to say. So she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

'I believe that I had been in love with you for two years, Melanie, but I was not quite aware of it.'

It was getting dark. But the evening stars had already thrown their reflections into the blue waters of the sea.

KARL SPRINGENSCHMID

The First Narcissus

It was a Monday, as usual in early spring. The sun was rising over the rocky hills of Mont Agel, and exactly at six the first narcissus bloomed, by the side of the big road on the upper valley of La Turbie. It was an ordinary narcissus—a thin fragile stem, six white petals, and yellow stamen in the middle.

By the time it was half past two in the afternoon, some thirty thousand narcissuses bloomed, all over the coastline and hills of La Turbie. But it was an event, which could not be all explained in botanical terms as it had also a tender humane side. Because this particular narcissus which bloomed earliest, stood on a rather dangerous ground—a small grass stripe near the sharp S—curve of the big road—a curve demanding utmost vigilance from the motorist.

At six twenty five the yellow Peugeot fully loaded with tomatoes, belonging to vegetable dealer Pierre Pegomas, and at six forty five the old grey Ford of the

principal of the high school Louve from Menton passed by this spot. At eleven past seven—when the narcissus was still in her virgin hours of bloom, the proprietor of the boarding-house 'Beau Sejour' was driving his blue Citroen on the curve. By noon some twenty five Peugeots, nineteen Renaults, eighteen Citroens, and thirty seven cars of foreign make without counting the Fords, had passed over this curve, but the narcissus was not noticed by anybody.

Shortly after this at three minutes past twelve the seventeen year old commerce student Roger Ecrason was taking the curve in his red sports-coupe Jaguar XK 120 which really belonged to his uncle Etienne Ecrason—a rich businessman.

Next to him was sitting Denise—the fifteen year old daughter of soap manufacturer David Daugette of Mirabeau street. Her red blond hair was flying like a festoon and her thin blue dress was being pressed on her body by the strong wind. Denise was really proud and happy that she was driving over Grand Corniche in such an open sports-coupe.

But suddenly she noticed the narcissus, which stood so lonely near the road.

'Oh!' she exclaimed in her excitement and clasped Roger's arm. 'The first one. Let us stop.'

But Roger Ecrason was taking the dangerous curve. He pushed away Denise's soft hand rather rudely. 'Leave that,' shouted Roger in a shrill voice. The narcissus was already left behind. He took three more curves. Then he drove back to La Turbie.

It was evening. By this time two hundred forty four cars, without counting the Fords had passed over the curve, but still the narcissus was standing lonely on the small grass stripe.

There appeared the young bricklayer Marcel Mourdon. He was walking slowly—barefooted with his shirt wide open at the breast—chewing some crust of bread. He was just sixteen, without parents, poor and lonely. He just stood still as he noticed the narcissus. 'Is it already in full bloom?' murmured Marcel. He looked at his hand and it was so red with the dust from the bricks. He wiped his hand clean on his trouser, and picked up the flower. Then he walked up to La Turbie.

Until now he had never thought of talking to Denise Daugette. But he saw her standing before

the house—in her pretty dress. To Marcel she appeared so beautiful and heavenly as she stood there—a flame of passion in the twilight of Mirabeau street. He could not help coming to her. He presented her the narcissus—'It is for you.'

Denise smiled but only by the way. Because she was already waiting impatiently for the red sports-coupe.

'It is the first one,' Marcel said. While saying this he mustered more courage. But just then the red sports-coupe was gliding on the road. Roger Ecrason stopped the car, and hurriedly opened the door.

But Denise was only tenderly looking down on the narcissus as if she had not noticed Roger at all. Certainly it was the same narcissus which Roger did not bother to notice. Somebody who did not care for such a beautiful flower standing lonely on the road, would care less for a young girl left equally lonely in the world!

Roger was getting impatient, and was blowing the horn.

Marcel's heart was touched. 'And it has also a name,' he said rather passionately.

Denise lifted her head up in surprise. 'What it is? Also a name?'

With a loud bang Roger Ecrason shut the door of his car, accelerated and drove away through Mirabeau street.

'Yes, the name,' repeated Marcel in a sweet voice. Then he said in a gentle but determined tone—it was the final word that he wanted to say—'It is called "Beautiful Denise".'

55 Short Stor

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